

There is one key skill all students can learn that can contribute to their classroom success: Being organized!

This may sound simple to someone who is a “naturally” organized person. But for students whose thoughts can often go off in random directions, being organized can be tough.



Here are a few tips I use with my students at Boys Town that you can share with your students (and their parents) to help them stay focused and stay on track with all their classes.

Keep an assignment notebook. Students should keep a list of everything they need to do each day for every class. This provides a visual “roadmap” of assignments, and having a completed list of schoolwork at the end of the week gives students a sense of accomplishment. You may even want to create a system to have parents sign off on their child’s assignment notebook.

- 1. Use folders or a binder to keep everything together.** Some students may prefer to use different colored folders for each subject while others might like using a binder with tab dividers. Help your students set up whatever works best for him or her. For example, a folder’s left pocket can hold papers that need to be done and turned in to the teacher while the right pocket can store papers that have been completed. Or, you can organize a binder with tabs for each subject, separating assignments that need to be completed from those that are done. Let students take the lead in deciding what method to use and how to set it up; this will give students “ownership” of the project and make it more likely that he or she will use it.
- 2. Ask parents to check the assignment notebook and share organization tips with them.** Parents can greatly contribute to homework success by supporting their child as they learn to be more organized. Here are some tips you can share with parents as you help students learn to become more organized:
 - Help supervise the homework and organization process until your child feels confident enough to do it on his or her own.
 - Set a homework time early in the evening so your child can complete and organize all the assignments for the next day before he or she gets tired.
- 3. Take time to evaluate how this method is working at least once a week.** Ask students these questions about his or her organizational system:
 - **Do you feel more confident about knowing where your work is and when it is due?**
 - **Is it easier to pull assignments together for reviewing for tests and quizzes?**
 - **Can anything be adjusted to make the system work better?**

Finally, praise progress! It will take time for students to develop these new habits. But if he or she can begin to see the benefits of being organized and using an organizational system, and earn your praise for working hard and improving their homework, those habits are more likely to stick. And, your students will be learning a skill he or she can use for a lifetime.