

# *The Organized Student*

Teaching Children the Skills for Success in School and Beyond



Donna Goldberg  
with Jennifer Zwiebel



# Table of Contents

---

Introduction

1 Understanding the Organized Student

2 Getting Started

3 Lessons from the Black Hole

4 The Binder-Based and Accordion File Folder System

5 The Desktop Filing System

6 Settling Down to Work

7 Understanding Time Management

8 The Planner

9 Big-Picture Planning

10 The End-of-Year Wrap Up

11 The Teenager's Bedroom

12 Expect the Unexpected

Further Reading

Resources

---

**Quiz: Do you need this book?**

Should you keep reading?

---

- ☐ **A.** My child never loses his homework, gets all his homework done on time, and never misses a deadline.
- ☒ **B.** My child has trouble remembering his assignments, has papers crumpled in his backpack, and regularly misses deadlines.

Check Answer



# Introduction

---



---

**MOVIE 1.1** Interview with Susan Goldberg

---



# Understanding the Organized Student



## Is My Child Disorganized?

The organized student:

- Doesn't carry everything he owns in his backpack
- Can identify and bring home the books, supplies, and worksheets he needs in order to complete his homework
- Can locate his finished homework in class and hand it in on time
- Can study efficiently because he knows when tests are coming up, has set aside enough time to study, and doesn't waste time looking for class notes and handouts

The disorganized student:

- Frequently loses papers
- Doesn't hand in assignments on time or at all
- Has a backpack full of crumpled paper and random objects
- Can't break down long-term projects and misses deadlines
- Leaves everything for the last minute
- Disrupts home life with frantic searches, urgent requests for late-night help, and anxiety-ridden meltdowns



---

There are two types of organization: **cerebral** and **physical**. Cerebral organization allows you to organize information mentally, filing it in your brain so that you can access it, manipulate it, and use it to generate new ideas. Physical organization refers to the way you manage your space and your stuff. This book explores the aspect of cerebral organization that relates to time management and addresses physical organization and how it impacts academic achievement. By examining your child's habits and academic patterns, you will be able to determine where he's running into trouble. Once you understand the nature of the difficulty, you can design solutions to meet his needs.

In order to create an organized student, you need to know what one looks like. The **rule of thumb** is that an organized student can find what he needs when he needs it.

The disorganized child, on the other hand, exhibits a range of behaviors that inhibits his **performance** in school. Behavioral patterns signaling disorganization emerge at different **stages of development**. Some students show signs of disorganization at an early age, while others are fine until middle school or high school when everything suddenly falls apart. Some indications of disorganization include maintaining a messy school **cubby** and having trouble making it from one room to the next

without losing something. Older students' patterns are even clearer and more problematic.

For more information on helping students with special needs get organized, visit this [website](#).





# Lessons From the Black Hole

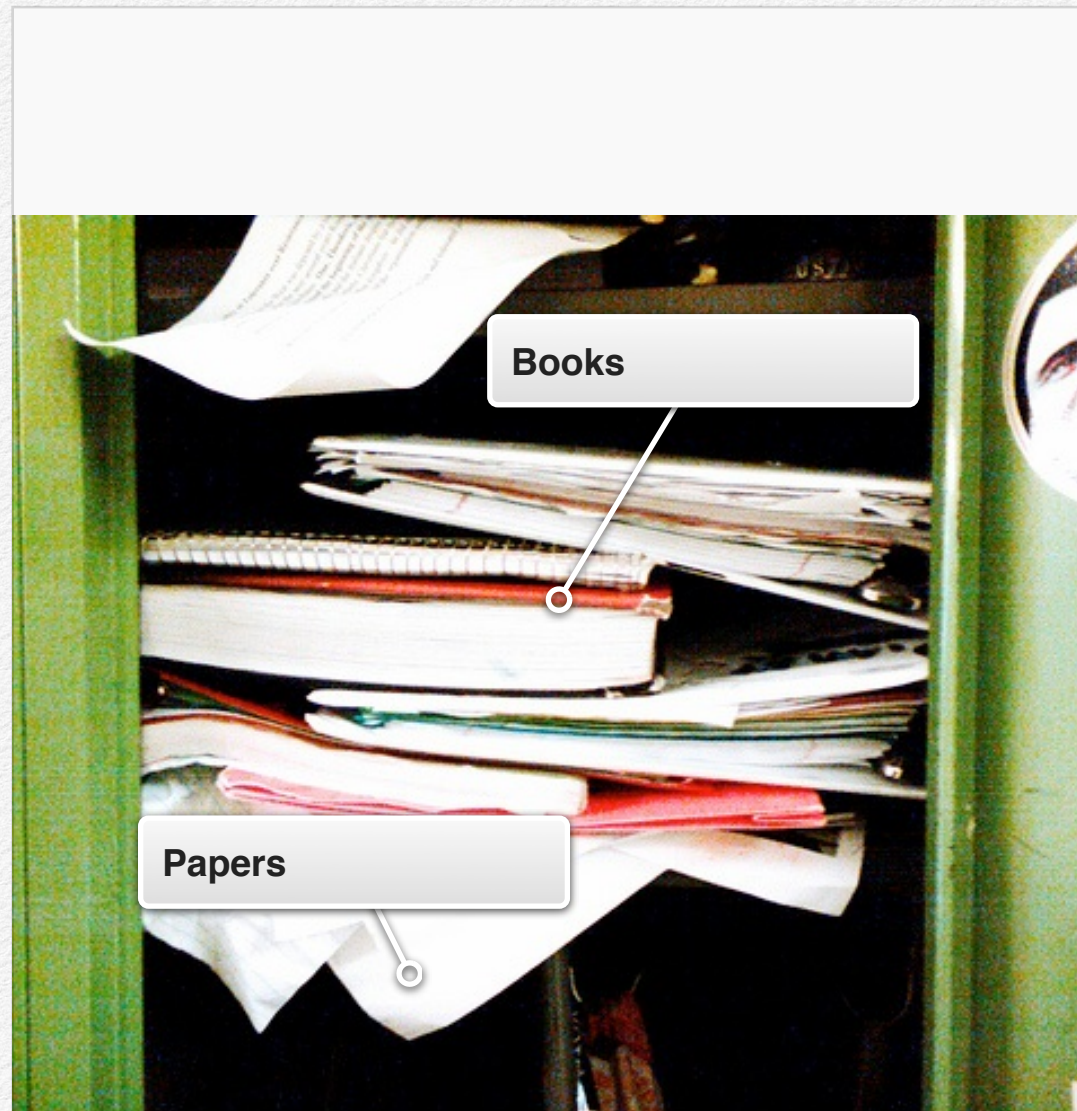
You know your child better than anyone else does. He may be willing to work with you and take everything one step at a time. He may give you one shot to pull together the entire system, and if you blow it you're out of luck. He may work with you only under threat of punishment or lack of reward. Whatever you have to do, take the commitment seriously and keep your focus on the task at hand. Success, whether it's an organized backpack or an hour spent together without arguing, will bring your child back for session number two.

When you're starting the session, come armed with as much knowledge as possible. After answering the assessment questions, use the PACK method, described below, to help your child organize his locker. You can begin this process with your child whenever you are both ready—in September, before school starts, or in May, before finals. It's never too late to get organized.





**IMAGE 1.1** The locker, before organizing



**Image 1.2** The locker, after organizing





---

# P.A.C.K.

(Purge, Accessorize, Categorize, and Keep It Up!)

## *Purge*

This step can either be done in school or at home. If your child plans to do this in school, he can use the floor as his workspace for purging and organizing. Most kids, however, will not want to do this in school with their friends around. They may also not be able to do it alone—and they will almost certainly not want you joining them at their lockers. If this is the case, send your child to school with shopping bags, a duffel bag, or a large, strong garbage bag and tell him to bring everything home so that you can go through. If you do this on a Friday you should be able to find an hour over the course of the weekend to work on it.



# Appendices

2

---

## **GALLERY 2.1** Organized kids have more free time.

---



Understanding that organized students have more free time may be one way to help motivate your child to get organized.



# Further Reading



## Housekeeping

Ager, Stanley, and Fiona St. Aubyn. *Ager's Way to Easy Elegance*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1980.

Mendelson, Cheryl. *Home Comforts: The Art & Science of Keeping House*. New York: Scribner, 1999.

Pinkham, Mary Ellen. *Mary Ellen's Clean House!: The All-in-One-Place Encyclopedia of Contemporary Housekeeping*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1993.

## Learning Differences

Dawson, Peg, and Richard Guare. *Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2004.

Hallowell, Edward M., and John J. Ratey. *Answers to Distraction*. New York: Bantam Books, 1994.

Hartmann, Tom. *ADD: Simple Exercises That Will Change Your Daily Life*. Grass Valley, CA: Underwood Books, 1998.



---

Kolberg, Judith and Kathleen Nadeau. *ADD-Friendly Ways to Organize Your Life*. New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002.

Levine, Mel. *All Kinds of Minds: A Young Student's Book About Learning Abilities and Learning Disorders*. Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service, Inc., 1993.

Lyon, G. Reid and Norman A. Krasnegor. *Attention, Memory, and Executive Function*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1996.

Mooney, Johnathan, and David Cole. *Learning Outside the Lines*. New York: Fireside, 2000.

Ratey, John J. *A User's Guide to the Brain: Perception, Attention, and the Four Theaters of the Brain*. New York: Vintage Books, 2001.

Shaywitz, Sally. *Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

Silver, Larry B. *The Misunderstood Child: Understanding and Coping with Your Child's Learning Disabilities*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998.

## Preservation

Kovel, Ralph, and Terry Kovel. *Kovel's Quick Tips: 799 Helpful Hints on How to Care for Your Collectibles*. New York: Crown Trade Paperbacks, 1995.

Long, Jane S., and Richard W. Long (text), Ingle-Lise Eckmann (general editor). *Caring for Your Family Treasures*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2000.

Tuttle, Craig A. *An Ounce of Preservation: A Guide to the Care of Papers and Photographs*. Highland City, FL: Rainbow Books, Inc., 1995.



# Shopping List

General

- ☐ colored markers
- ☐ label maker
- ☐ label maker tape

Backpack Accessories

- ☐ cellphone holder
- ☐ keychain, keys
- ☐ general information sheet

Locker Accessories

- ☐ extra shelf
- ☐ message board

Traveling Paper

- ☐ accordion file
  - ☐ 7 pocket
  - ☐ 13 pocket
- ☐ 3-hole punched lined pad
- ☐ subject notebooks
  - ☐ composition
  - ☐ graph paper
  - ☐ spiral
  - ☐ wireless
- ☐ 3-ring binders:
  - ☐ 1/2 inch
  - ☐ 1 inch
  - ☐ 1-1/2 inch
- ☐ paper
  - ☐ 3-hole punched
  - ☐



# Anxiety

Distress of uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Assessment

---

## Index

Find Term

- Chapter 1 - Lessons From the Black Hole
- Chapter 1 - Lessons From the Black Hole
- Chapter 1 - Lessons From the Black Hole
- Chapter 1 - Lessons From the Black Hole
- Chapter 1 - Lessons From the Black Hole



# Assessment

The act of evaluating.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Anxiety, Performance, Projects

---

Index



# Assignments

Something assigned, as a particular task or duty.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Projects

---

**Index**



# Cerebral

Pertaining to the brain. Mental, as opposed to physical.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Physical

---

**Index**



# Commitment

A pledge, promise, or obligation to oneself to to another person.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Organized

---

Index



# Cubby

Any of a group of small boxlike enclosures or compartments, open at the front, where children keep their belongings, usually at school.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Lockers, Search

---

**Index**

Find Term

**Chapter 1 - Understanding the Organized Student**



# Disorganized

Functioning without adequate order, systemization, or planning.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Organized, Search

---

Index



# Disrupts

To cause disorder to turmoil within a system or environment.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Punishment, Search

---

Index



# Efficient

Performing or operating in a way that produces the desired outcome with the least waste of resources possible.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

Index



# Handouts

Any printed, typed or mimeographed copy of information, usually sent home with school-age students for either homework or informational purposes.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Homework

---

**Index**



# Homework

Schoolwork that is specifically assigned to be completed outside of classroom hours.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Handouts

---

**Index**



# Lockers

Metal enclosures used in schools to provide students with a dedicated space to keep their personal belongings. These are usually associated with middle and high school, once students are old enough to begin changing classes. In younger grades, students typically use cubbies in their classroom.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Cubby, Search

---

Index



# Organized

Having a formal structure that is conducive to keeping oneself on schedule.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Commitment, Disorganized

---

Index



# Performance

The way in which a task or course is completed, which is often formally evaluated and labeled for school children.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Assessment, Projects

---

**Index**

Find Term

**Chapter 1 - Understanding the Organized Student**



# Physical

Of or pertaining to the body, as opposed to the mind.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Cerebral

---

**Index**

Chapter 1 - Understanding the Organized Student



# Projects

Discrete activities or groups of activities designed to promote learning and understanding in school-aged children.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Assessment, Assignments, Performance

---

**Index**

Find Term

# Punishment

Negative consequences that are the direct result of undesirable behaviors.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Disrupts

---

Index



# Purge

To clear out unnecessary items.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

Index

# Rule of thumb

A standard guideline that is usually implied or inferred rather than explicit.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

Index

Chapter 1 - Understanding the Organized Student



# Search

To look for things that are lost. This activity is engaged in regularly by disorganized students.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Cubby, Disorganized, Disrupts, Lockers

---

**Index**

# Stages of development

This typically refers to the emotional and psychological changes that occur to human offspring between birth and adolescence.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

Index

Chapter 1 - Understanding the Organized Student