

10 TIPS TO STAY ORGANIZED

You overslept. The history paper that's due today has gone missing. On the way out of your room, you trip over the pile of dirty laundry between your bed and the door. You get to class, only to find out that you've completely forgotten about the test you're taking today.

All of these nightmares can be prevented by improving your organizational habits!

These tips and suggestions will make it easier for you to find everything, remember what's going on, and – hopefully – improve your high school experience.

1. Organize your room/study area. It might take a few hours, but you can divide it into small tasks. Once this is finished, you can look around and see a big difference: all of your things will be easy to find, including those all-important assignments that are due soon!

2. Find a convenient and easy way of recording assignments. Many students use a day planner to track due dates, assignment specifics, and other vital information. You can use your computer's spreadsheet program, a dry-erase board, or plain notebook paper – the idea is to find something you're comfortable with. Whatever method you choose should have plenty of room for you to keep track of dates assigned, due dates, assignment requirements, and notes. This is faster and easier than flipping through all of your notebooks, trying to make sense of your scribbles.

3. Don't wait until the day before the due date to begin any assignment. Sit down every weekday and look at your organizer: work a little on whatever is due first, then move on to the second due assignment, then the third, etc. If you finish ahead of schedule, reward yourself: twenty minutes with your favorite computer game, a phone call to a friend, or a trip out for ice cream. Also: remember to take study breaks for at least ten minutes every hour, even if you're desperately behind schedule. Slouching over your desk for too long will only make things worse, and the stress in your body won't make the job any easier to complete.

4. Make sure that all of your work for each class is in the same place. You don't want one history paper in Folder A and another in Folder B. Instead, use one folder or notebook for each subject or invest in one larger binder and use dividers to separate each subject. Either way, keeping everything together will make it easier for you to find it, remember it, and turn it in.

5. Take good notes. It is easy to lose focus in class, but make sure you find a way to stay concentrated. Whether that means you need to be playing with a pen or doodling on your notebook to prevent daydreaming, just find what works for you. Circle, highlight, and/or underline key terms to be able to refer back to them easily. Write clearly enough so that you understand your own notes. If there is something that doesn't make sense, make sure you write a question mark next to it to remind yourself to ask your teacher for clarification after class.

6. Discuss issues with the teachers as soon as they arise. Many students and parents wait too long to discuss potential problems with teachers. It is the job of teachers and professors to help you through your difficulties. Make the most of it and bring issues to their attention as soon as they arise. That way, it will be less likely to have any negative impact on your academic record.

7. Make a nightly habit of packing your book bag, being sure that your alarm clock is set for the correct time, and deciding what you'll wear the next morning. Get as many things done that night as you can to help avoid the morning rush out the door: the most important thing you'll have to worry about at seven a.m. is deciding what to have for breakfast!

8. Create structure. Let's be honest: The more structure in place, the more that gets accomplished. Isn't it true that you accomplish more if you have a busy day planned rather than a day in which you aren't expecting to accomplish anything?

9. Set certain times of the day for studying, homework, and other school-related activities. Once you've established this habit, stick with it: some days will be harder than others, but it will get better as time passes. When this time comes around, turn off the TV or music, ignore your phone, and get rid of any other distractions

10. Get plenty of rest every night, including weekends. If you're running on too little rest, your brain – the world's most complex organizer/computer – will lag like crazy. It's nearly impossible to keep track of ANYTHING, even with organizers and other tools, if you can't think clearly.

