

Organising yourself and your belongings

Ages 11-18

Students who experience difficulty organising themselves throughout the day may benefit from utilizing a variety of strategies. It is essential to discuss the options with both student and parents to ensure the strategies become automatic and useful for the student. They may initially need considerable adult support, but the level of support can be gradually reduced as the student's independence increases.

Preparation for the school day

Using two week timetables

Use different colours to code Week 1 and Week 2, on timetable and on a year planner at home.

Reading timetable and remembering items

- Transfer information, regarding e.g. sports kit, library book, musical instruments onto a weekly planner
- Use pictures/symbols to remind student to take specific items to school, e.g. sports kit, library book, musical instruments
- Use a colour coded system to identify all information relevant to a subject e.g. Maths = red, English = blue. Book covers are available in different colours and will also help to protect books
- Use checklists or post-its on bedroom wall
- Duplicate timetables, e.g. home/school/locker door

Packing school bag

Students with poor self-organisation often carry everything with them to ease their anxiety:

- Encourage student to empty bag at end of each day. Set up an organised storage system at home, e.g. filing trays, drawer/box file, colour coded to correspond with 'colour' of subjects; have storage space for large pieces of equipment, e.g. kit, musical instruments
- Encourage student to pack bag the night before to reduce stress and anxiety in the morning
- Use a checklist and cross-check with timetable/planner
- Purchase a school bag suitable for student's requirements. Consider size, type, style, number and accessibility of pockets (enough to assist with organisation but remember, too many may cause confusion)

Organisation within the school day

- Self and belongings – consider provision of a designated place (box in Learning support, locker) for student to leave specific equipment, e.g. musical instrument, laptop, PE kit, books
- Lockers or a designated place will be useful for students who prefer to carry everything everywhere. Carrying heavy bags will place excessive strain on the spine/joints of students who are already at risk, due to physical disabilities or co-ordination difficulties
- When writing on loose sheets of paper encourage student to write name, subject, date and number on top of each page.
- Encourage student to file sheets at end of each lesson by using:
 1. Coloured plastic pocket files
 2. Exercise books covered in coloured plastic book covers
 3. A4 ring file with dividers coloured for each subject
 4. Triangular cardboard pocket inserted into back of exercise book to slot work in and keep in order
- Ensure workplace is uncluttered – return equipment to correct place after use
- Lunch breaks – raise staff awareness of need to support student with management of money, tray, lunch box

Remembering important information

- Use rough book/small pocket-sized notebook to jot down important things to remember
- Make lists of things to do and cross things off when they are done
- Keep post-it notes in bag/working file to write notes to yourself. Decide on a consistent place to stick/write messages
- Leave clear space on timetables for adding reminders
- Use transparent pencil cases for ease of visual checking
- Simple check lists in 'link book/planner' to remind student of items they regularly need to take home e.g. blazer, laptop,
- PE kit, musical instrument

Following the instructions of a task

- Encourage student to read directions aloud twice to ensure student has understood them
- Highlight directions with a marker
- Check off each step as it is completed

Homework

- Use a wall calendar to record important dates or events
- Ensure regular homework and after-school activities are noted on weekly timetable.
- Use a 'plan' book to keep track of daily/weekly/monthly homework assignments
- Use a homework diary/folder/box file
- Dividers could be used in a ring binder/folder to identify days of the week and homework can be filed under the day it is due in
- Colour code homework for filing according to subject
- Ensure student has understood and correctly recorded homework set. If necessary provide adult/peer support so that student remembers homework
- Student may benefit from attending homework clubs