

Organization Skills: Tips and Tricks

Organize your Time

List & Prioritize: Using a “to-do list” to organize various tasks will help you prioritize your responsibilities and use your time more effectively! These tasks can be separated into three categories: time-sensitive and most important, important but not urgent, and regular tasks that can be accomplished when the first two categories have been completed. You can assign a number or colour to each category, or create a chart, to help you organize these tasks into the three categories. This list should be created at the beginning of EACH week and a notebook works great! Crossing off items on this list, once completed, feels great!

Use a Calendar: Use a weekly & monthly calendar or planner/agenda, whether it be a wall calendar, a desk calendar, an agenda/planner book, a printable version, Google Calendar, or an App. Recording your appointments, extracurricular commitments, homework, upcoming projects and tests, under the corresponding dates and times, will help you to manage your time each week. When using a digital calendar, be sure to set up reminder notifications! You can download the following Apps to organize your tasks according to due dates: [Wunderlist](#) & [myHomework](#) Student Planner, or use this [Digital Planner](#).

Embrace Class-time: Use class-time to start your homework and update your agenda (written or digital). Using class-time wisely will likely prompt you to ask more questions, will reduce the amount of time you will need to spend on homework, and will help you to organize and shorten your “to-do-list.”

Enjoy Home-time: Create a household schedule that includes your regular routines. Also, designate specific times to relax and do the things you enjoy, in addition to your responsibilities, so you do not lose track of time. When completing homework, designate a time each day during which you are most alert and functional so that you can make the best use of your time. Even if you are not assigned homework, this time should be dedicated to reviewing notes, reading ahead, or working on an upcoming project. It can take as little as 18 days to form a new habit!

Find Balance: Balancing your time with family/friends and your academic/extracurricular responsibilities is essential! Communicate with your friends and family members about your academic obligations and schedule study time between family activities, and time with friends. Create your own study plan that suits your learning/home schedule, while considering family commitments, much needed time with friends, extracurricular activities, and academic deadlines.

Plan to be Prepared: Before going to bed, take the time to plan ahead by gathering and organizing the materials you will need for the following day, and reviewing your calendar/agenda. Wake up early, fuel your body, and arrive early.

Tackle Long/Difficult Assignments Wisely: Try your best to avoid procrastinating by tackling lengthy and difficult assignments in an allotted time each day. Perhaps dedicate 20 minutes to complete these tasks at Flex, at lunch, during your spare, or in the evening. If the assignment or test preparation involves various sections, tackle one or two sections each day, as soon as the task is assigned.

Organize your Resources

Organize Materials: Use a three ring binder, and dividers, to separate each subject, and ensure that you place your handouts/assignments behind the corresponding subject tab/divider. You can even colour code the types of handouts in each subject (notes, test prep, assignments, units) with additional tabs or post-it notes. Or, you can designate a binder for each class, if the aforementioned system does not work for you.

Visually Prioritize Materials: Consider including the most time-sensitive assignments/homework at the front of each tab and number the assignments in the order that they are due. Alternatively, you might want to keep a folder or two in the front pocket of your binder, to house ongoing or completed assignments that must be submitted; you could title these folders “To Do” and “Done.”

Download & Use Apps: Educational Apps are valuable resources and many are available for free. These Apps can help you review notes, practice languages offered at Thurber (French, Spanish and Japanese), prepare for tests, and improve your writing and research skills; furthermore, they serve as additional and easily accessible tools to help you stay organized and achieve success. You can organize Apps on your phone, your desktop or your tablet by creating a new folder titled “School Apps.” Try these: [Good Notes](#), [Evernote](#), [Duolingo](#), [Grammarly](#), [TextGrabber](#), [FlashTabs](#), [Quizlet](#), [Khan Academy](#). The [Career Centre Website](#) is also a great resource!

Check Google Classroom Regularly: It is imperative that you check Google Classroom on a daily basis. This resource is invaluable because your subjects are already divided for you, the due dates are clearly identified, and each Classroom will include materials/resources reviewed in class, in the event you misplace a handout or leave important materials at school!

Keep Track of Supplies: Keep track of what supplies and materials you will need for your upcoming study session, assignment completion or extracurricular activity. Once you begin studying, working on an assignment, or participating in a sport, you will not want to interrupt the session by looking for these materials. If you have a designated storage place for your materials, you are more likely to find your materials easily, and remember to bring them with you. You may want to use your locker at school, a designated area in your entryway at home, a special spot in your bedroom, etc..

Contact your Teachers: If you have misplaced your materials or you lack supplies, know that your teachers are a valuable resource and are here to guide you and assist you. If you are having difficulty staying organized, reach out to your teacher, in-person, or by email.

Organize your Space

Find a Study Spot: Aim to study in the same space each time you work on homework or prepare for tests. Your chosen space should be void of electronic devices such as a television, phone or game console. Work to eliminate distractions to ensure your time is spent wisely which may mean putting your phone away! Your phone/computer/tablet should be used for research and assignment completion only, so be sure to close all other tabs/Apps. At school, this study space can include a teacher’s classroom, a hallway table, the Learning Commons, the Career Centre, the cafeteria, a peaceful area outside, etc. At home, this can be the kitchen table, a home office, the basement, or an area in your bedroom. You might even want to frequent a local coffee house!

Find some Privacy: It is essential to find a quiet space to work. If you can, try to find a space where you are alone and, if need be, close the door. Auditory distractions will often interrupt concentration and focus.

Arrange your Space: Have all of your supplies in arm’s reach: texts, notes, stationary, agenda, water bottle/snack. Your work surface should be organized, not cluttered with additional items. A cluttered space often leads to a cluttered mind and an organized space increases the efficiency of your time!

Choose the Right Chair: Find a chair that is upright and comfortable. You may want to position your chair in front of a blank wall, rather than a window, to avoid visual distractions.

Turn on the Lights: Ensure your space is well-lit! Studying involves plenty of reading and concentration, and requires you to be focused, so be sure your eyes are comfortable as well. Task lighting will help you see clearly and reduce eye-strain.

Clean Up: If you want to stay on top of your organizational game, ensure that you clean up your work space and your materials on a regular basis (at the end of each evening, bi-weekly, weekly). Clear off, tidy up, and organize the materials on your work surface; be sure to organize your binder(s) and your bookbag as well. You always want to find your materials easily and use all of your work-time efficiently.

Schedule Breaks Away from Work Space: Consider setting a timer to ensure that you take breaks during your study sessions. You may want to set your timer to go off every 45 minutes and allow yourself 5-10 minutes to take a bathroom break, grab a snack or a glass of water, play with your dogs, breathe in some fresh air, stretch, etc. Just remember to return to your studies after your break-time is up!

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