



# Organizational Tools

## Rationale

Some children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are very organized, while others may need extra support to locate materials and remember to bring their homework with them at the end of the school day (Kluth, 2004). The demands to remain organized increases as your child moves from primary to a secondary school context, therefore children with ASD largely benefit from learning how to use graphic organizers at a primary age (Mesibov & Howley, 2003).

## Benefits

- Children may become more independent and organized with materials, schedules, and class work.
- Provides predictability and structure for children with ASD helping them stay focused on completing school tasks and assignments (Mesibov & Howley, 2003).
- Children can see how ideas are connected and realize how information can be grouped or organized

## Prerequisites

- The ability to attend to visual material (e.g., objects, pictures or text)
- The ability to sequence information (e.g., first I need to put shoes on then I can go outside)
- Demonstrating the ability to categorize (e.g., school items: notebook, agenda, pencil case and backpack)

## Preparation

- A home, community or classroom routine should be planned and followed
- Your child need to be taught how to use the organizational tool
- The most visually appropriate and natural types of organizational supports for the child and his/her environment (e.g., family calendar in a home setting, school time table and back pack checklist )

## How to Teach

Graphic organizers are used to show information in an illustrative manner. Parents may create the graphic organizer and have their child fill in the information or, teach your child how to create his or her own.

Graphic organizers can be used to:

- Record key facts and ideas
- Summarize text chapters/units
- Create study guides
- Show inter-relationships among ideas (e.g., inter-relationships in an ecosystem)

## Checklists

- Checklists may be a series of pictures or a list of instructions to follow
- Reading checklists or word problem checklists can be used for all types of reading assignments or to help your child solve math problems.
- If your child forgets one of the steps, you can circle the step to prompt him/her finish it. (Mesibov & Howley, 2003)
- A 'cleaning your room' checklist can be posted in the home to remind your child of what they need do.



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## Written Schedules

- Written schedules can be used daily or weekly. Your child's planner/schedule can be inserted into a ring binder, transparent wallet and personal digital assistant (PDA).
- Changes to your child's schedule should be recorded so your child can adapt and anticipate the change.
- The schedules can also include important 'reminders' for your child such as 'homework time and various family events (Mesibov & Howley, 2003)

## Activity Plans

- A booklet that lists step-by-step instructions for participating in an activity such as going grocery shopping or any other community outing
- The booklet contains only one activity with pictures and/or words to explain each step.
- Activity plans can be made using paper stapled together. The name of the activity is on the front.

## Task Cards (May be used for children or adolescence who know how to read)

- Written instructions on a page or cue card telling the child, step-by-step how to complete an activity.
- By listing each step of the directions for the activity, parents can help their child to understand what is expected.
- The directions tell your child how to begin the task, what to do, and what to do when the task is finished.

## Assignment/Homework Notebooks

- A three-ring, zipper binder that contains the assignment notebook and a take-home pocket folder (Moore, 2002).
- When completing his/her homework notebook, your child should approximate how long it will take to complete each assignment. This will teach him/her how to manage his/her time effectively and realistically.
- Your child can also prioritize their assignments based on when each one is due.
- Request your child's teacher to give your child a copy of a completed assignment notebook so that they do not have to struggle with copying off of the board.
- Check and sign the notebook daily.

## Common Difficulties:

- Depending on the reading ability of the child, pictures may accompany words in various graphic organizers.

## References

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# Organizational Tools

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