

ALL THINGS. ORGANIZED. FOR KIDS

By Rowena List

Did you ever think your beautiful bundle of joy would come with so much stuff? By the time they're 16, we've filled our homes with more stuff and our lives with more to-do's than was ever comprehensible to us "before kids."

So how do we best corral all the stuff, and efficiently handle all the to-do's with calm and ease?

Here are my top tips:

Plan in advance

Your week. Whether using a central electronic calendar tool such as Google Calendar for the entire family, a paper-based system or large chalkboard, colour-code each child's activities for the week, including family time together. This will help to streamline the logistics of getting everyone to where they need to be when, with a clear view of the gear needed for each activity.

Create a calendar system for homework assignments and school projects. This helps to alleviate clutter in the mind,

worry about due dates and more, and is proven to be an important success factor for students of all ages.

Your meals. In general, families only eat about 10 different meals (their "go-to" meals). Once a week, take 15 minutes to plan meals that are easy to prepare and portable. Check your pantry and fridge, and then create your shopping list. Planning meals in advance has been proven to cut costs, eliminate waste and reduce stress.





Get your kids involved — monkey see, monkey do!

Not only do we need to lead by example with our children, but we need to teach them and create good habits starting early on. Replace “chores” with “household responsibilities” that everyone in the home partakes in; it’s more accurate and empowering.

Laundry. Teach your kids to separate their clothes at least by colour, and get them to the laundry room as a starting point. Every child is different of course, but by early tweens, having your kids doing laundry as a household responsibility is more than reasonable

Snack-time. At a young age, enlist your child as your sous chef, even if very simple tasks to begin with. By the time they’re in grade school, making a basic sandwich should be a breeze.

Clean-up.

- **Younger.** Give them a basket and ask them to pick up something specific (example: dolls or trucks — not just “toys”); repeat until an area is cleared.

- **Older.** By the time they reach early teens, their “household responsibilities” should be well engrained, which includes the regular cleanup of their bedroom.

A place for everything and everything in its place

Toys & Crafts. Create “zones” – the play zone, craft zone, reading zone and more. Children respond well to structure and routine and by having clear zones for activities and play, it corrals clutter throughout the house.

Homework. Designate a specific time and place when homework is done each day, and dedicate a shelf or cupboard where homework is kept.

Sporting equipment. A zone in the home is important when your child has a lot of sports gear. Create checklists and pack sports bags the night before to avoid forgetting important items.

Clear plastic, labeled bins are great for separating seasonal items. Launder items that can be washed right away, and make your own all-natural air freshener with essential oils to keep the “sports zone” in

the home smelling fresh and clean.

Memorabilia. One modest-sized, labelled plastic bin per child is recommended to store treasured keepsakes such as artwork, a treasured stuffed animal or an exceptional report card.

While it can feel like all of your child’s art work and school work is precious, it’s too easy to let it pile up over the years and become overwhelming to deal with. Be ruthless from the get-go, and take a picture of your child holding the keepsake as a way to keep more memories digitally, but let them go physically.

Having an organized home feels good for everyone living in it. Having systems, tools and routines in place for your kids will help them to feel more calm, secure and confident, while setting them up with the life skills and habits that contribute to their future success and happiness. ■



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