

Get Organized Without Losing It



Get. Organized Without Losing It

Janet S. Fox

Illustrated by Steve Mark

free spirit
PUBLISHING®



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Dedication

For Jeff and Kevin: With you by my side,
I'm never lost.

And for Barbara, my mom, who also
loved words.

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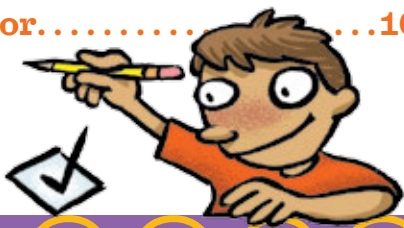
My thanks to Larry Rand, who taught me in ninth grade how to get organized.

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Is It Time to Get Organized?

Take this quick quiz to find out.

QUICK QUIZ

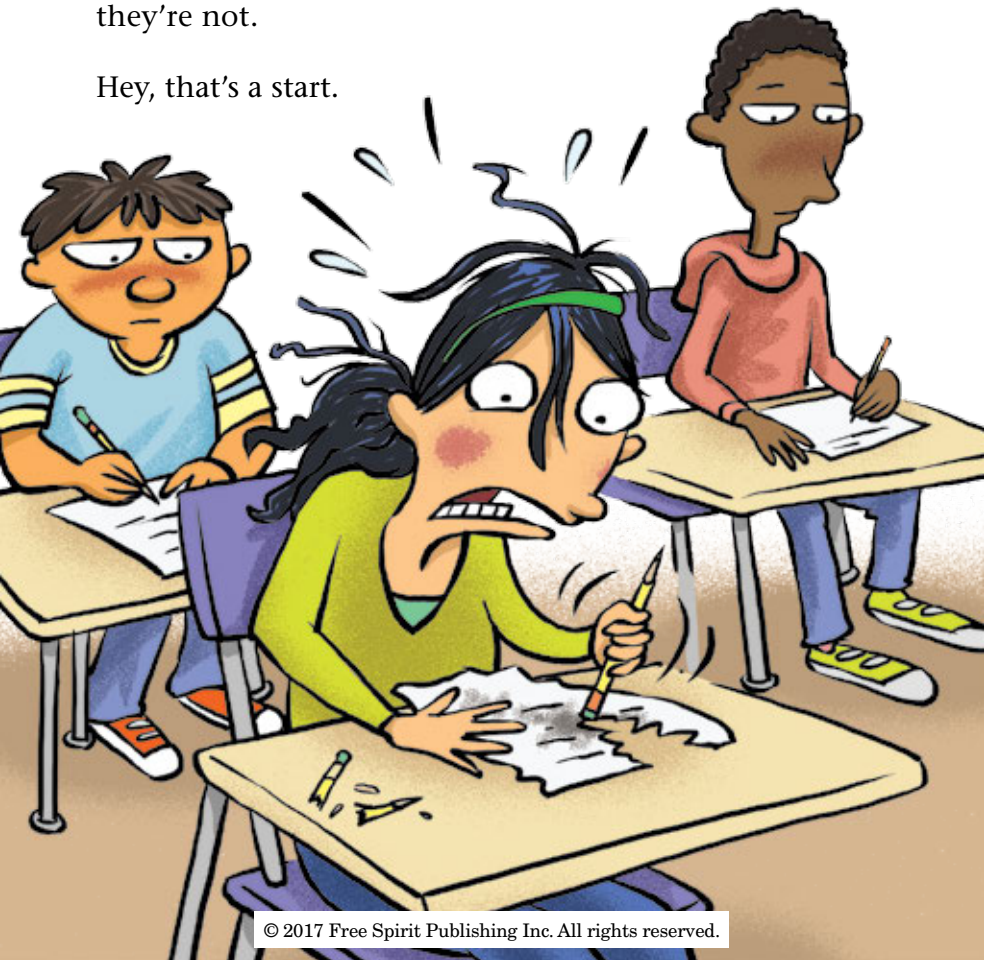
2. Do you spend tons of time looking for things you need in order to do your schoolwork or homework?
9. Do you feel like you're always running behind?
1. Is your desk at school a disaster?
6. Is your school locker a shocker?
7. Is your backpack a **black hole***?
4. Would your head fall off if it weren't fastened on?
10. Have you ever missed out on fun because your schoolwork didn't get done?
5. Are you forever losing the stuff you need in order to do your schoolwork or homework?
3. Do you wish you were more organized?
8. Are the questions on this quiz numbered in the right order?

* **Black hole:** A place in space where everything gets sucked in and disappears.

If you answered **YES** to one or more of the questions on the quiz, keep reading. Help is on the way.

If you answered **NO** to question #8, terrific! You can tell when things are organized—and when they're not.

Hey, that's a start.



Picture This

You plop down in your seat at school seconds before the bell rings. The teacher announces a pop quiz, and you search high and low for a pencil. When you finally find one, it needs sharpening, but there's no time.

During the quiz, you change your mind about the answer to question #3. But the eraser on your pencil is flat, and you rub a big black smudge on the paper. You waste time trying to fix it. When the teacher calls "Time's up!" you're still not finished with the quiz.





Then the teacher asks for yesterday's homework. You dig through your backpack, which is crammed with crumpled papers—everything but your homework.

Is it still on the kitchen table at home? Or maybe under your bed? You can't remember, and it's too late anyway. No homework means another zero.

When you get home after soccer, you watch TV for a while. Then you eat dinner, help with the dishes, and play with the dog.

About an hour before bedtime, you go into your room and dump the contents of your backpack on the floor. You realize you forgot your science book. Oh, no! There's a test tomorrow! At least you've got your class notes . . .

You reach for your binder, which is so overstuffed that it pops open and papers fly everywhere. Your science notes—when you finally find them—are illegible, and what you can read makes no sense.



You try to study for the test, but what's the use? You give up and mess around on your phone instead. When you finally go to bed, you are way too worried to sleep.

The bad news is—you probably won't do well on the test. The good news is—things don't have to be this way.

By the time the next test comes around, you can be a new person. Someone who's calm. Someone who's organized. Someone who's ready to do your best work.

TIP: Being organized does **not** mean being a total neat freak. It means spending **less** time going crazy and **more** time having fun.

Basic Tools for Getting Organized

To get organized, you don't need fancy furniture or a smartphone loaded with apps. You don't need special computer software or a tablet with built-in calendars.

You don't even need a parent who says, "Do your homework!" "What died in your backpack?" or "You're going to miss the bus AGAIN!"

What you **do** need are some basic tools. Let's start with things that will get you **to and from** school.





A sturdy backpack with proper straps, made of durable material, and having at least two compartments. Keep your everyday going-to-school stuff—house keys, wallet, calculator, folding umbrella—in the smaller compartment(s). Use the larger one(s) for your binder, folders, laptop or tablet, and books.





Some schools have rules about backpacks. Like: No solid backpacks—mesh or see-through only. No rolling backpacks—they can be a tripping hazard. (Rolling backpacks lighten the load for many kids, but some schools still won't allow them. Or they allow them but make kids carry them inside the school building . . . which kind of misses the whole point.) To make sure you don't get the wrong kind of backpack, ask your teacher or check on your school website before you buy.

THE CURSE OF THE TOO-HEAVY BACKPACK

Does your backpack weigh almost as much as you do?

Thousands of kids are injured each year because of overloaded backpacks. Experts say that your backpack should weigh no more than 10 percent of your weight. In other words, if you weigh 90 pounds, your backpack should weigh 9 pounds. Not empty . . . **full**.

Some kids carry backpacks that weigh as much as 45 pounds! No wonder they have back pain, neck pain, or shoulder pain. Sometimes this causes kids to miss out on school or sports activities.

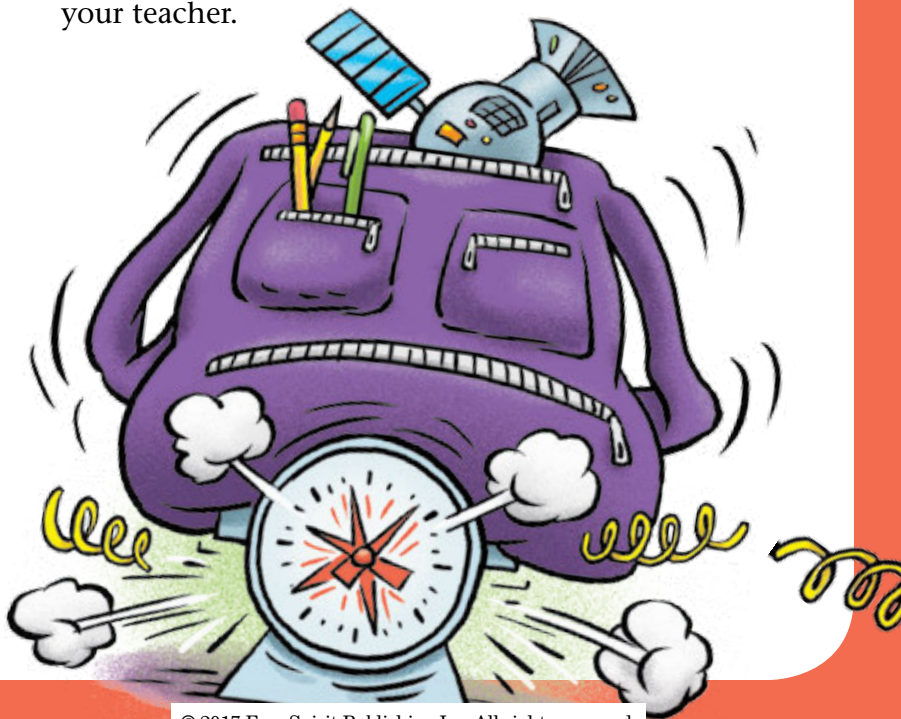
So travel as light as you can. Carry only what you really need. Don't load up on personal items. Don't carry your NASA shuttlecraft model to school (for a whole lot of reasons). And even if it looks cool to sling your backpack over one shoulder, don't. Wear it like it's made to be worn: on your back, using both straps.

Adjust the straps so the weight of the backpack hangs in the middle of your back, where your muscles are strongest. If your backpack has a waist strap, use it. And, by the way, a light plastic sack with string straps is not a backpack. If you carry one of those you could end up with sore shoulders and crumpled papers.

TIP: For many kids, the heaviest things in their backpacks are their textbooks. If lugging textbooks to and from home is a problem for you, start by bringing home only the books you need for that night's homework (or that weekend's study). No science assignment? Leave the science textbook in your locker.

Some schools keep a classroom set for use in school, so you can keep your set at home. Other schools use digital textbooks that you can access on your computer or tablet.

If you're still loaded down with textbooks, talk with your teacher.



One or more homework folders. A homework folder is any folder with two pockets. The pocket on the **left** is for homework you need to do. Label it “Home.” The pocket on the **right** is for homework you’ve done. Label it “School.” You may need a homework folder for each subject, so check with your teachers.

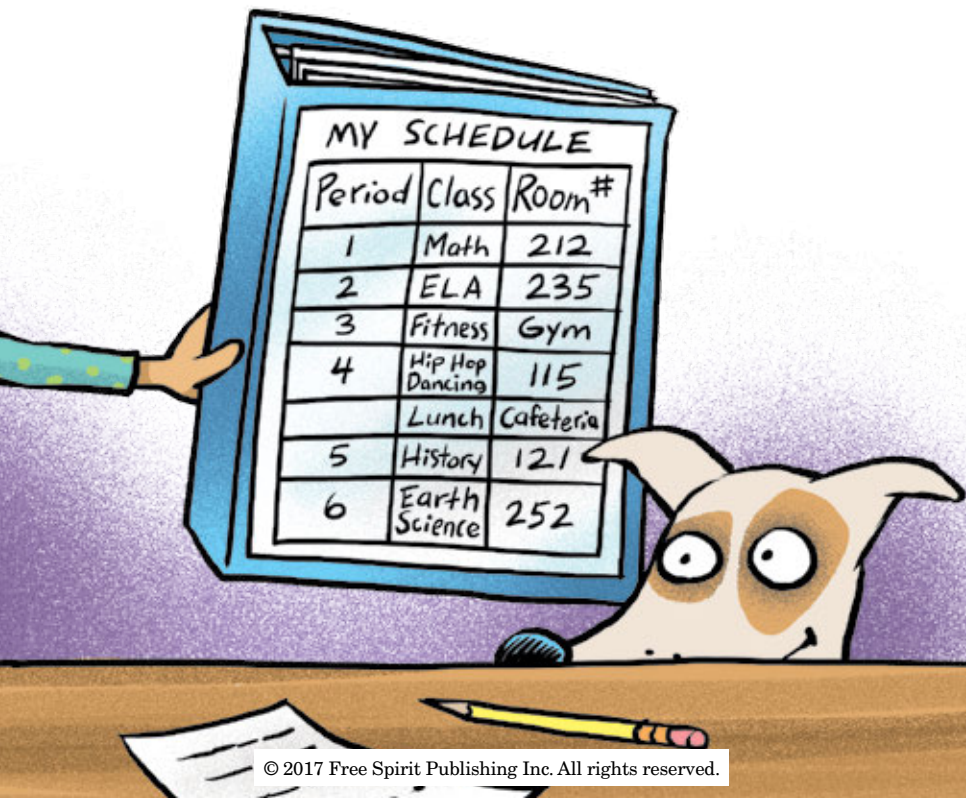
You can make a homework folder using heavy paper and tape or staples.

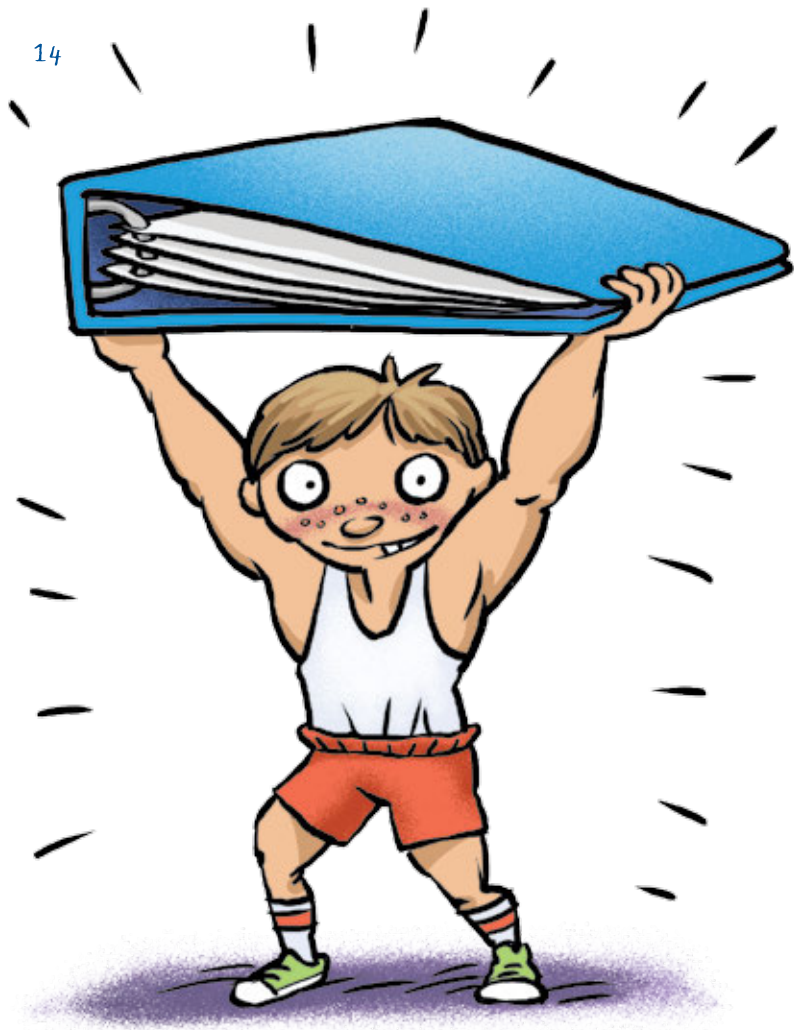


A really good binder. The best ones have a locking ring mechanism—the kind that snaps open and closed. If (make that **when**) you drop your binder, everything won't fall out. Otherwise, that's a surefire way to ruin your day.

What **size** binder is best? One with 1½" or 2" rings. That should be enough to hold five school subjects.

Some binders have a clear plastic cover sleeve. You might use it to hold an assignment sheet, your class schedule, or your homework checklist (more about that later).



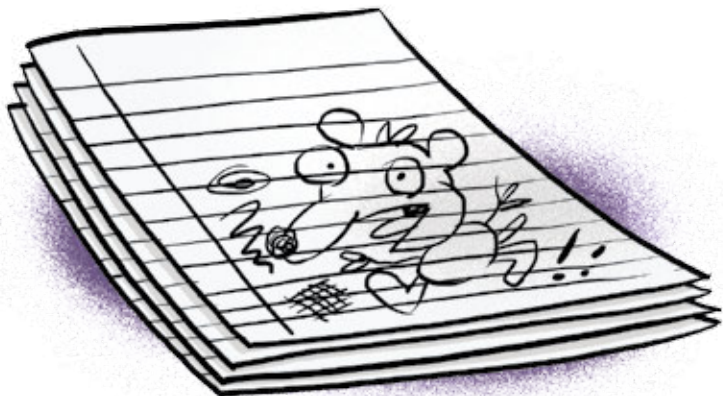


Some schools have rules about binders. Like: No giant three-ring binders. They're too big to fit in many desks and too heavy to carry unless you're an Olympic weightlifter.

Things to keep your binder organized. Like:

- **Subject dividers.** Colorful subject dividers make it easier to find things in your binder. Be sure to label the tabs by subject: English, Science, History, Math, Geography. You can even divide subjects into sections. In English, you might want separate tabs for Vocabulary, Spelling, and Writing.

TIP: You might add a Personal Reference Section tab up front. Keep commonly misspelled words, math facts, science facts, how-to lists, and other helpful study tools there.



- **A supply of blank paper.** Make sure you keep a good supply of blank paper in your binder for note-taking or pop quizzes. (But, um, not for passing notes to classmates.)