

# ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS

Being organised involves being able to plan, initiate, sequence and complete a task within a required time. Being organised relies on your child's awareness of space and how objects relate to one another. It also involves your child's ability to problem solve and to prioritise what is important. Organisational skills can be learned and practiced from a young age using play activities.

As your child grows the need to be organised increases as they gain independence in self-care tasks including getting dressed. There is also more responsibility to organise their own space and belongings as well as the need to organise books and record homework in school. Children who struggle in this area may have difficulty setting priorities, making plans, sticking to a task and getting things done.

## The following strategies are commonly used in Occupational Therapy and are recommended to develop your child's organisational skills;

- **EARLY YEAR'S TOYS:** Toys that involve matching shapes and sorting similar objects into containers can help your child to develop spatial awareness and an awareness of which objects are related and should go together.
- **PLAY AND TIDY UP TIME:** Helping your child to learn that every game has a start and an end is important. Tidy up time is an essential part of play that helps to develop organisational skills. Labelled storage containers can be used to help with tidy up time and sorting toys after play. Photos can be taped to storage boxes if your child cannot yet read. For example photos of balls, cars, lego can be used so that your child can identify what toy goes where.
- **ROUTINE:** Having a consistent routine is essential when helping your child to learn about how to be organised. For example following a similar routine each morning when getting ready for school will ensure that your child learns the steps of the routine through repetition. This will increase their level of independence overtime and will also ensure that they get ready for school on time. Similarly developing a consistent bedtime routine is also important.

- **USE VISUAL SCHEDULES:** Visual schedules are a series of pictures or photos that are organised in a sequence. They can help a child to learn the steps involved in completing a task.

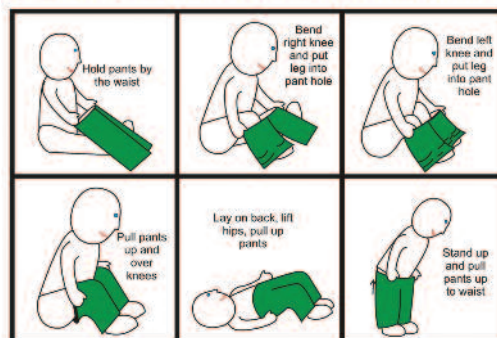
Visual schedules can be used for everyday activities including dressing, toileting, bathing, the morning routine and the bedtime routine. They can be created by taking photos of your child completing the steps of the task, taking photos of the clothes being used when dressing or photos relating to the task can often be found online.

Creating a visual should be led by the child to ensure they are involved in the process and to ensure they have meaning. Photos can be cut out and pasted in their sequence by the child. The child should also take the lead in choosing the best place to put up the visual. This will ensure more success with its use. Visuals are only required until the child has developed independence in a particular task or until the routine is learned.

Sample visual schedules for self-care tasks can be found online. The dressing skills visual seen above can be found at <https://www.yourtherapysource.com/product/dressing-skills/>



## VISUALS DRESSING SKILLS



### 1. PJs OFF



### 2. Underpants on



### 3. Shirt on



### 4. Pants on



### 5. Jumper on



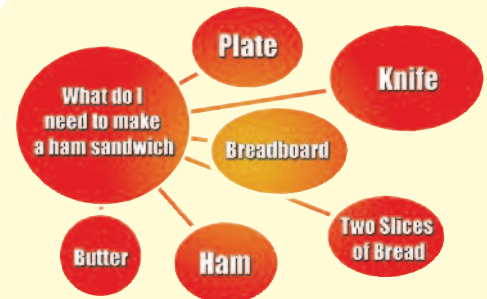
### 6. Socks on, Shoes on



- **SIMPLIFY THE TASK:** Breaking a large task into smaller steps can motivate a child to engage. For example the task of tidying a bedroom may appear daunting to a child that struggles to plan, initiate and problem solve. However breaking the task into steps may appear more manageable.

1. Sort your toys into boxes
2. Pick up clothes from the ground
3. Sort clothes in your wardrobe
4. Hoover the floor
5. Empty waste bin
6. Take clothes to laundry.

- **PRACTISE CREATING MIND MAPS WITH YOUR CHILD:** A school going child that has developed drawing and handwriting skills can practise creating mind maps to plan out tasks. A mind map is a diagram of your child's thoughts. Mind maps can be used to organise everyday tasks such as; what needs to go in my school bag; what do I need to make a sandwich; or what do I need to take on my sleepover. They can also be used to plan out ideas for an essay that needs to be written for school. Mind maps prompt planning, brainstorming and can support a child to organise and initiate a task independently. Mind maps can also be designed on the computer using Microsoft word. Mind mapping software is available online such as Kidspiration or Inspiration software. <http://www.inspiration.com/visual-learning/mind-mapping>. Graphic organiser templates can also be found online on websites such as: <http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/>



- **AWARENESS OF TIME AND TIME MANAGEMENT:** It is difficult for a child to become organised without an awareness of time. When learning the time the child should be encouraged to wear a wristwatch and take the lead in setting up and using an alarm clock. When becoming independent in the steps of their morning routine it is important to discuss the time your child needs to get up from bed at; the time your child needs to be ready for school at. This will help to make them aware of the time they have to complete tasks. Reward and offer praise for efforts made.



- **HELP YOUR CHILD TO PRIORITISE IMPORTANT TASKS FIRST:** Learning how to prioritise tasks is something that your child may need to practise. When getting ready for school your child may need support to learn that all the important tasks such as dressing, feeding, toileting and organising the school bag should be completed first before screen time or leisure activities.

- **USE CHECKLISTS:** Creating and referring to lists together will develop your child's ability to organise their time and prioritise tasks. Your child can tick the items off the checklist as they are completed.

- **NEW ACTIVITIES NEED TO BE PRACTISED:** For example a child moving into Secondary School may need to get a bus on their own. To ensure your child feels organised and independent with this task it would be important to simplify the task overtime.

1. A mind map could first be completed of the steps involved and the items needed. This can be kept in the child's bedroom for them to refer to and check each morning.
2. You could role play the steps involved in the task at home.
3. Your child could practise the steps of the task under your supervision.
4. Your child could trial the task on their own.

- **KEEP A FAMILY CALENDAR:** Keep a calendar on the fridge for everyone. Encourage your child to write down entries and reference the calendar when making plans.

- **ASSIGN CHORES THAT INVOLVE SORTING:** These can include grocery shopping, loading and emptying the dishwasher, sorting photos, sorting books on a shelf by size or type, matching socks or sorting clothes in a wardrobe.

- **WHAT DOES A TIDY ROOM LOOK LIKE?** Consider taking a photo of how your child's bedroom looks when it is tidy. They can reference this when they are tidying up.



- **GET READY THE NIGHT BEFORE:** Packing the schoolbag the night before means one less task to complete in the morning. Packing the lunch box the night before and storing it in the fridge. Setting the table for breakfast.

- **PACKING THE SCHOOL BAG:** Your child can explore the best ways to sort books and copies. For example tall books in the back, small books in the front. Your child could choose a routine pocket/place for storing the pencil case and lunch box. Placing a keyring/key tag onto the zip of the school bag with a reminder to check that I have my pencil case or lunch box can ensure items are not forgotten.

- **BRING HOME BOOKS FOR HOMEWORK:**  
A book box/see through storage container could be set up on or under the child's school desk making it easier to reach and sort the books needed. A label could be placed on the school desk entitled 'books for homework'. Your child can place the books needed on top of this label as the day progresses and places them into the school bag when all homework has been allocated at the end of the day. Alternatively your child can be reminded to place the book straight into the school bag when homework is issued.

- **ORGANISING SCHOOLWORK:** Books and copies can be colour coded. Maths book and copy could have a yellow sticker placed on the side of the book. English reader and copy could have a red sticker. Colour coding helps with sorting and finding items more easily.

- **ESTABLISH A HOMEWORK ROUTINE:** Again consistency is key. Try to stick to the same time every day where possible and set up a comfortable workspace. A visual/to do list can be created of the subjects to be completed.

- **COOK OR BAKE TOGETHER:**  
Cooking and baking helps your child to learn about measuring, following directions, sorting ingredients, and managing time.

- **GAMES THAT CHALLENGE ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS FOR THE OLDER CHILD:**  
Orienteering, Obstacle Courses, Board games, jigsaws, card games, Lego and construction.

