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NEAT SPACES EZINE AUGUST 2007

Brought to you by Wendy Hollick, Professional Organizer

I'm excited to announce that I've been nominated for the SavvyMom Mompreneur of the Year Award! Please visit [my profile](#), then vote for me! Everyone who casts a vote will be entered in a draw, and to thank you for your support, I am offering 10% off all organizing services booked by September 16, 2007.

Fall is traditionally associated with "back to school" but whether this affects you or not, fall is all about getting back to a regular routine after the carefree days of summer.

THIS MONTH: FALL ORGANIZING TIPS

1. **Clothes Closets:** Before you put away your summer wear, take the time to get rid of any items that are worn out, stained, or don't fit any more. If there are things that didn't get worn this summer, figure out why - maybe it's time to pass them on too.
2. **Linen Closets:** This is a terrific time to make sure if you have enough bedding for the cold weather ahead. Often you'll find you have more blankets than you need, so why not donate them to a charity who will make sure they are put to good use?
3. **Outside:** Before you put away patio furniture, garden tools, and other seasonal items, make sure they are clean and in good working order. Arrange for any necessary repairs or replacements now, so you're ready to go when spring comes again.
4. **Back to School:** Of course, no fall organizing issue would be complete without tips on getting ready for back to school! This month I'm happy to share an article written by one of my organizing colleagues - I couldn't have said it better myself!



BACK-TO-SCHOOL ORGANIZING TIPS

How do you know it's Back-to-School time? Some would say it's when the stores fill the shelves with pencil cases and notebooks. Others might say it's when that infamous Staples commercial starts to air - you know the one. The background music plays the holiday favorite, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year..." Moms and dads are dancing down the school-supplies aisle as their children's sad faces follow behind.

Back-to-School season marks the start of a new year for many kids and their parents. It's a time to start fresh and create some new habits for the school year. Not sure where to start? Sharpen your pencils and take notes of some tips for making the next school year more organized for you and your child.

REVIEW

Think about your kids and how the school year progressed last year. Were papers lost? Homework not finished until 10pm? Were the kids always prepared for their school day? Take

out a piece of paper. Fold it in half - on one side write 'Last Year' and on the other side write 'This Year.' In the 'Last Year' column, jot down what tasks/events/projects did not go smoothly. In the 'This Year' column write how changes can be made for the new school year.

For example:

Last Year

- Missed the bus/carpool often

This Year

- Get kids up 15 min earlier
- Pack lunch after dinner
- Park packed bookbags at door

Have a family meeting to discuss how to make the new school year more organized and productive time. Work together to create systems as well as rewards for staying organized.

SUPPLIES

Take advantage of Back-to-School sales and stock up on supplies. By winter break the tips of most glue bottles have become clogged and by spring break you've run out of loose leaf paper. Store these extra supplies in a box/container in your child's closet or desk.

Create a home for supplies that your children use on a daily basis (scissors, pencils, paper, etc.). Have younger kids decorate a coffee can for their crayons/pencils--let teens pick out colorful containers for their desk/study space. This will give them a feeling of ownership—they'll be more likely to take good care of their belongings. Emphasize to your children that time spent searching for supplies is time that they could be outside playing or talking on the phone. Being organized will allow them to accomplish more in the same amount of time.

Inventory your children's school supplies 3-4 times a year. Supplies are used, borrowed, easily lost or broken. If you know what supplies you have and what you need, you'll never be caught short before a big project is due.



HOMEWORK

Designate an area for homework such as the child's desk or a kitchen table. Keep their supply box/container close to their work area for easy storage and retrieval.

Get into the habit of doing homework at the same time and in the same place every day. Getting children into a routine will help to keep them organized.

Organize time spent doing homework. One way is to encourage your kids to tackle the tougher subjects/assignments first. They'll be relieved to finish and have enough energy left to complete the easier assignments.

PAPER

Create an area for incoming/outgoing papers. This could be a box where the children empty their book bags of notes from the teacher, school newsletters, trip slips and any other paper a parent has to see.

Purchase a small file cabinet or box for temporary storage of papers, old exams, etc of that semester. Label hanging folders by subject. At the end of the year go through the papers with your child. This will enhance their decision making skills and organize their papers at the same time.

Even little ones who cannot read yet can start getting organized. Write their name on a box or plastic container. Have your child decorate it and cut pictures of themselves on it. Tell them that it is a special 'house' for their artwork, coloring books, etc. and any papers that come in from preschool or daycare.

PREPARATION

Prepare the night before for the next day. Preparing items the night before makes for a less stressful morning for both parent and child. Some things you can do 'the night before' are:

- fix/pack lunch and leave in refrigerator
- pick out the next day's clothes
- pack bookbag with all books, papers, necessities for the next day after homework is finished.
- Set out plates/bowls for breakfast

Make sure to include your child in the preparation process. It may take them longer to complete a task but they will benefit in the future through 'learning by doing.'

Article by Stacey Agin Murray, professional organizer and owner of Organized Artistry, LLC. Visit <http://www.organizedartistry.com> for your FREE e-list of 'Top Ten Tips for Organized Living.'

For help in managing your time, de-cluttering, paper management, meal planning and home staging, please contact **NEAT SPACES Professional Organizing Service**. To book our services, please send an inquiry email to neatspaces@cogeco.ca.

"You can't have everything. Where would you put it?"
~Steven Wright

I hope you enjoyed this issue of the **NEAT SPACES EZINE**. Please feel free to forward it to your friends and colleagues.

If there are topics you would like to read about in future issues, please let me know!

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