

If your home has kids, one of your most frequently asked questions is likely, "Is your homework done yet?" The process of bringing work home, completing it, and turning it in the following day starts in grade school and continues through high school and beyond. (Those documents and spreadsheets you review for an hour before bed are the adult–world equivalent of homework.)

Kids today are being pulled in many directions—school, activities, and socializing. Many schools hand out supply lists and distribute day planners on the first day of class with the expectation that these items will magically work for everyone. Unfortunately, one size rarely fits all. "We all want to create order out of confusion, but just one solution does not suffice," says Kathy Jenkins, Certified Professional Organizer and founder of The Organizing Tutor. "And as a parent, you can't expect your way of studying to automatically work for your child either. Times have changed, and even more importantly, everyone learns and thinks in his or her own way."

Like the targeted storage solutions she recommends to homeowners with disorganized rooms, Jenkins begins her work with disorganized students by thoroughly assessing their challenges, personalities, and preferences. Based on the work of educational experts Katherine Benziger and Lanna Nakone, who explore the connections between brain activity and personality, Jenkins invests significant time identifying each student's thinking style. The portions of your brain that you naturally prefer using—left or right, front or back—impact

how you work best. Knowing which of four thinking-style profiles you most closely match (see *pages 14–17* for personality details) leads to specific strategies for how you can best manage paper and time. "And if you can manage your paper and your time effectively, you're on your way to a more organized life," Jenkins says.

Early on, Jenkins introduces her clients two or three approaches to managing paper, maintaining a schedule, and establishing home study zones. They discuss pros and cons of each option, and eventually the student picks the version that seems to best fit.

To most parents' relief, Jenkins'

recommendations rarely require costly supplies or furnishings. Discount and office supply stores offer nearly all the necessary tools to optimize a student's backpack or set up an easy-to-maintain home filing system. You certainly can invest in a beautiful desk for a child's bedroom, but if his or her thinking style doesn't mesh with sitting alone in one spot to complete tasks, your efforts are likely in vain. "Is your goal for your child to sit at a desk—or to do his or her homework?" Jenkins asks. A better option for some kids might be a worktable in a corner of the family room, a bookcase brimming with resources, or a portable caddy with frequently used supplies. In the end, your choices all come back to the student. "It doesn't really matter what specific shape students' organizing systems take, just that they make sense to them," Jenkins says.

RESOURCES BEGIN ON PAGE 115.

# **MANAGING PAPER**

Take control of documents that stream in and out every day with one or more of these tools.



## ; Expanding files.

Drop papers into the appropriate slot and go. Look for reinforced gussets and enough removable tabbed folders for every subject.

Binders. Fill these classic organizers with paper, dividers, and folders.

Try one big binder for multiple subjects or several small ones for each subject.





for long-term storage in these labeled holders.
Further organize folders with a desktop sorter or a box with hanging files.

# MANAGING TIME

Make the most of each month, week, day, hour, and minute with these three helpers.



Calendars. Get a bird's-eye view of your schedule and make longterm plans. Of course tech options abound, but print versions reinforce time's limited nature.

Planners and agendas.

Break down tasks into small bites. Look for versions with prompts for weekly, daily, and even hourly goals.





Clocks and timers.

timekeeper makes each passing minute tangible. Timers help you create and achieve small goals.

# **Give Prioritizers** easy ways to display awards and trophies.

### **PERSONALITY 1:** THE PRIORITIZER

#### **TRAITS**

- Front- and left-brain thinker
- Strong analytical abilities
- Facts and logic
- Decisive nature
- · High standard of competence

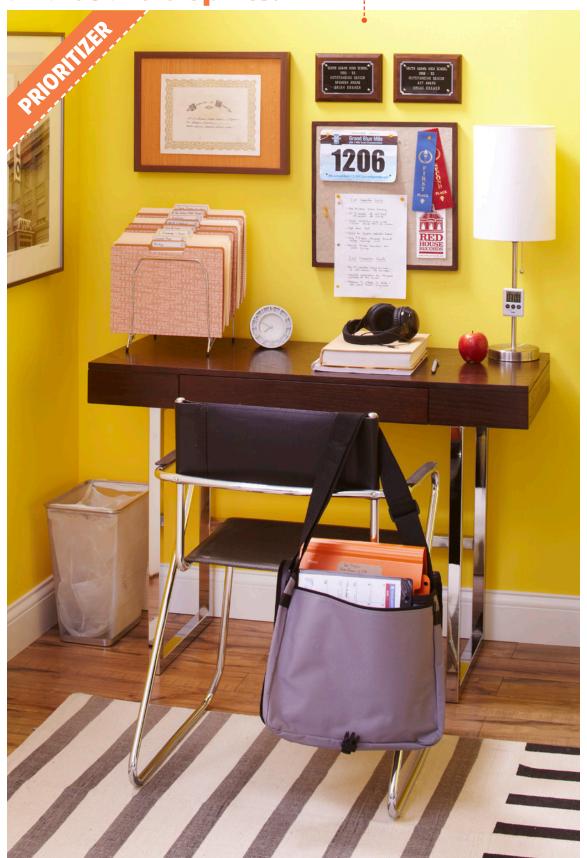
#### **SPACE**

Prioritizers prefer minimal, orderly, and logically organized work spaces. Opt for quality over quantity, stocking a distraction-free area with a few high-quality furnishings and supplies. Keep the colors muted and the style streamlined.

Prioritizers generally manage time well and need only a basic analog clock, timer, and monthly calendar. A list of goals—monthly, quarterly, or annuallyprovides much of the inspiration for success.

#### **PAPER**

Because they're constantly editing down the best information, Prioritizers generally have few papers to organize. A single multitabbed expanding folder will manage daily papers, while a standing rack with folders takes care of longer-term paper storage. Handwritten labels on files and folders do the job quickly and effectively, which is what matters most to Prioritizers.



#### **PERSONALITY 2:** THE INNOVATOR

#### **TRAITS**

- Front- and right-brain thinker
- New ideas and concepts
- Imagination and vision
- Expressive
- · Likes to troubleshoot problems

#### **SPACE**

Innovators prefer unstructured, free, and creative work environments. Keep them tethered to reality with a large worktable and flexible seating. Let them repurpose furniture and supplies to suit organizing needs.

Because they dislike routine, Innovators struggle with time management. Outfit work space with a large analog clock and visual timer to reinforce the opportunity of each moment. Supplement a monthly planner with Post-It reminders for assignments and activities.

#### **PAPER**

An expanding folder with color-coded tabs lets an Innovator quickly slip papers in and out. Skip the file folders for long-term paper storage and opt for plastic document sleeves that the student can pile up on a tray.



Clear containers and hooks help Innovators keep tabs on supplies.

bhg.com/storage STORAGE FALL/WINTER 2013 15 Support Harmonizers with open storage and display opportunities.

#### **PERSONALITY 3: THE HARMONIZER**

#### **TRAITS**

- Rear- and right-brain thinker
- Social
- · Warm, inclusive nature
- Emotional
- Supports and encourages others

#### **SPACE**

Harmonizers thrive in relaxed, colorful rooms where they can be surrounded by special, personal items. They want to be around others and will camp out in a family room or kitchen to be near the action. Skip the expensive desk and purchase a caddy of supplies that they can take anywhere.

#### TIME

Harmonizers can work effectively with schoolsupplied calendars, but one with less detail may work better. Create detailed schedules for activities before and after school

#### **PAPER**

A single binder with pocket dividers will take care of daily organizing needs. Longer-term storage can be accomplished with magazine boxes and folders. Try using pictures as labels.

## special thanks

Mead Five Star, Order Out of Chaos, The Organizing Tutor, Time Timer



#### **PERSONALITY 4:** THE MAINTAINER

#### **TRAITS**

- · Rear- and left-brain thinker
- Order and habit
- Step-by-step routines
- Follows rules
- · Enjoys responsibility

#### SPACE

Maintainers love details and prefer work spaces that are meticulously ordered with a place for everything. They enjoy having the right container and clear labels. Because they dislike interruptions, they want to work alone at dedicated desks in their room or an established study space.

#### TIME

Establish daily routines and checklists to guide Maintainers to success. A detailed weekly or daily planner (such as a gridded planner from Order Out of Chaos) helps them monitor schedule changes.

#### **PAPER**

Thorough and consistent, Maintainers can manage multiple binders for individual subjects or topics. They're likely to enjoy filing older papers in a file box or drawer equipped with hanging folders. They opt for typed labels or ones made with a handheld label maker.



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