
TRY THIS



Here are five simple tips for getting and staying organized in your classroom.

- Have a designated spot for everything. Papers to be returned to students have their own spot along with papers to be graded, project materials, materials for today's lessons, student supplies, paperwork to be turned in to the office, computer supplies, parent communications, folders for future lessons, student projects, and so forth. Label all of these, and don't allow anything to go where it doesn't belong. You know the saying, "A place for everything and everything in its place." If you don't have a place for everything, you're inviting chaos. Do the same with computer files. Make sure that they are in specific folders on your computer, organized, and easy to find without having to search your entire hard drive for a simple document.
- Keep a Today and Tomorrow box. It's a simple organizational tool that can save you time and headaches. For example, if you have a document that must be turned in to the office tomorrow, place it in the Tomorrow box. You might get to it today, but it's not necessary. If you have to answer a parent's note or e-mail, place it in the Today box. If you have a set of test papers that you want to return to your students today, place it in the Today box. You get the point. And simply be sure that the Today box is left empty at the end of the day. Then quickly put the contents of the Tomorrow box into the Today box so that it's ready for you when you arrive at school the following day.
- Explain the organization of the classroom to the students. Show them where certain things go and remind them often. Be clear on your expectations about how their desks or workstations should be kept. And hold them to it. When students are clear about your expectations, they're much more likely to comply.
- Allow the students to help you stay organized. Let's say you're working with a group of students and someone knocks on your door to deliver some paperwork that must be returned to the office by this afternoon. Simply ask a student to please place it in the Today box

for you. Another way to get the students to help you is to provide about thirty seconds at the end of the class period for each student to clean his or her work area. This way, when the students leave there's no mess for you to clean.

- If you've let things go and you're overwhelmed and confused about where to even begin, ask an organized teacher for help. There are teachers who would *love* to help you if you'll only ask. These teachers are not likely to show up, uninvited, for an organization intervention.