



Organizing...Clean Your Room

As children we dreaded the words, “Clean your room!”. When our mothers issued the order, we swore never to use them on our own children. Daily this order is given by those same children who are now mothers themselves.

Parents ask the question “How do I get my child to keep his room picked up?” A professional organizer’s response is “Do they know where to put stuff they pick up?”

As mothers we are quick to give orders, but slow to give direction. Starting with an organized space is crucial to keeping harmony in our homes. We send our children off to preschool where teachers instill order by having cubbies for each child, a label on every station, and daily routines for our children to follow. It is only when our children come home that routine goes out the window.

Children crave order, but don’t know how to achieve it. Some of my best clients are below the age of 10. They want to please and the satisfaction of a job well done. This goal can be achieved by following one principle: Assign a home for every item. The concept is simple, but for most of us the practice is difficult.

When organizing a child’s area, remember to keep things on their level. Get on your knees and check out the space. Place function above form when decorating a child’s room. Invest in furnishings and containers that will grow and expand with your child. If you want your child to put away his clothes, make sure that he can operate the dresser drawers and reach closet rods. If a door is in the way of putting up toys, remove the door. Organize from bottom to top. Place everyday items on the bottom and those rarely touched near the top. You never want a child to climb for his favorite truck.

Make purging part of your organizing practice. We are all limited by the space in which we live. If you bring new items in, something must leave. Purging is the most difficult with children because of emotional attachments. Help to break this attachment by giving your child permission to purge. Believe it or not, children are afraid to discard broken toys and clothes that no longer fit for fear of disappointing their parents.

Too often we think of organizing as putting stuff away. Organization is about retrieval. Finding what we want when we need it. For children, using the proper container is key. The most common mistake is to use toy boxes. A toy box creates a “black hole” effect. What goes in, never comes out. Kids blindly throw items in when “picking up” rather than sort. Sorting like items into the proper sized container creates the order that we need. Containers help parents control the number of toys being played with at a time. “You can play with the car drawer, after you put up the pirate drawer.”

In order to achieve success when organizing a kids’ room, you must label. Type it, write it, or draw it. Children must know where an item goes in order to put it up. Labels serve as a reminder. Make sure to use terms that your child will identify with. Place the label in clear view: inside or outside the drawer, on the edge or a shelf, or on the fronts of containers. Labels make organizing a game -- Put a toy away by finding the matching label.

Organizing is a process not a project. It requires lifestyle adjustments and daily reinforcement. By putting a simple, age appropriate system in place, order will be achieved and maintenance will become routine. Your child will relish his newly organized space because there will be more time to for you and he to just be together.

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Let’s Get Organized!

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