

# Organisation Skills

## What is organisation?



Organisation involves the ability to establish the tasks that you need to do, by when and how. Part of organisation is understanding the requirements of the task.

Being 'organised' is a crucial skill not only for academic success but for life.

## Why is organisation important?

Organisation is an important aspect in play, language, social interaction, personal management (e.g. self-care tasks or bringing home all their belongings from school) and academic task performance (e.g. homework, project planning and performance).

Organisation is typically a skill that needs to be specifically modeled, supported by sensible structures (such as diaries or visual charts, labelled storage containers) and reinforced by realistic routines (pack away one toy/task before commencing another).

Organisation is important to develop a structured and consistent approach to tasks at all times, but is even more important for those with poor planning and sequencing, language challenges, attention difficulties and learning difficulties.

## **What are the building blocks necessary to develop organisation?**

- **Executive Functioning:** Higher order reasoning and thinking skills.
- **Self Regulation:** The ability to obtain, maintain and change one's emotion, behaviour, attention and activity level appropriate for a task or situation in a socially acceptable manner.
- **Sensory processing:** Accurate registration, interpretation and response to sensory stimulation in the environment and one's own body.
- **Attention and Concentration:** Sustained effort, doing activities without distraction and being able to hold that effort long enough to get the task done.
- **Motivation:** The desire to be involved in interventions and improve skill level.

## **How can you tell if my child has problems with organisation?**

If a child has difficulties with organisation they might:

- Be generally disorganized (lack awareness of time frames, the materials needed for a task).
- Struggle to get themselves ready on time.
- Have difficulty collecting materials for school (e.g. getting out material such as the right book for a classroom activity).

- Have difficulty packing their bag for school.
- Have difficulty collecting the materials needed for play activities.
- Have difficulty putting multi-step tasks together (e.g. construction).
- Appear lazy and not completing work (*when in fact they may not know how to start the task*).
- Get distracted easily or shows poor attention to the task.
- Have difficulty getting thoughts down on paper.
- Have difficulty using language in an ordered and logical way to give instructions, tell a story or express ideas and thoughts.
- Frequently lose personal items (e.g. lunchboxes and sweaters).
- Appear disinterested in developing independence in self care skills.

## **What other problems can occur when a child has organisation difficulties?**

When a child has organisation difficulties, they might also have difficulties with:

- Visual processing.
- Sensory processing.
- Limited play repertoire
- Learning.
- Self care and independence.
- Expressive language skills (how they use words and put them together).

## **What can be done to improve organisation?**

- **Use visual cues** (either picture or word lists) of what needs to be done or packed to support help develop memory of the tasks or the steps in the routine.
- **Establish and stick to a routine:** Routine helps memory and also allows the child to 'chunk' a group of tasks together.
- **Break large tasks into smaller ones** wherever possible, even if it seems silly (not only does this offer support skill development, but also reduces anxiety).
- **Practice makes perfect:** Additional practice is often required on an on-

going basis to learn and retain a previously mastered task.

- **Established self instruction strategies** including self questioning that the child can use independently across all environments and kind of organisational tasks.
- **Visualisation:** Encourage the child to visualise the tasks or the environment to help determine what items are needed or what steps come next.
- **Think in reverse:** When it is hard to know where to start, start with the end in mind and work backwards to see if the items or steps can be recalled in reverse. For some children this gives the task more functional meaning so the organisation has more comes more easily.
- **Pack in advance:** Pack for school the night before when there are less time pressures of the morning routine.

### **What activities can help improve organisation?**

- **'To Do' lists:** Are a helpful way of keeping track of what needs to be done. Get your child to tick activities off as they complete them. Remember this can be done using pictures instead of words.
- **Use a diary:** Help the child to get in the habit of recording important information and dates in their school diary to be presented to a parent each night.
- **Sequence activities:** Discuss how the sequence of completing tasks in a set order helps the outcome as if the child understands why it often helps the recall.
- **Break activities into smaller steps:** Ask the child to write down the steps of an activity so that they can plan how to complete the task.
- **Assign chores that involve sorting or categorising:** Grocery shopping, emptying the dishwasher, sorting photos, cleaning out a closet, and other tasks that involve pre-planning, making lists, or arranging things are great choices. We tend to recall things by groups of category but the child needs to learn them first!
- **Cook together:** Cooking teaches measuring, following directions, sorting ingredients, and managing time - all key elements in organisation. Involve your child in meal planning too, challenging them to help you put together a shopping list.

- **Use containers and closet organisers:** Help the child to physically organise their room. If there's a place for everything (and *they* chose that place), they will find it easier to find items and, keep neat and tidy it. Include 'pack up time' into the daily routine to make sure things stay organised.

## **Why should I seek therapy if I notice difficulties with organisation in my child?**

Therapeutic intervention to help a child with organisation difficulties is important to:

- Develop simple strategies at home and preschool or school to develop the 'habit' of being organised.
- Enable a child to be successful in demonstrating their true academic ability by not letting organisation difficulties undermine academic performance.
- Develop and model executive functioning (higher level thinking) skills that are required for many complex activities such as project completion as much as bag packing at the end of the day.
- Help develop independence in self-care and play which in turn impacts self self esteem.
- Ensure the foundation for successful preschool and school entry are in place as organisation is high in the list fro both (at varying levels of course).

## **If left unchecked what can difficulties with organisation lead to?**

When children have difficulties with organisation, they might also have difficulty with:

- **Academic under-performance:** A child being unable to reach their full academic potential. In many cases organisation is the key to success. If a child fails an assignment because they were not organised enough to get

it done and hand it in on time, they are not giving themselves the best chance to achieve.

- **Poor self care skills:** Challenges with daily activities. As organisation is a skill that to some degree needs to be explicitly taught and modelled, it is important that they have access to strategies such as the use of visuals to allow them to be successful in daily activities.
- **Behavioural difficulties:** Avoidance and poor behaviour. Children with organisation difficulties are often very aware of their challenges and quickly learn to subtly (or not) avoid them. This only reinforces any skill delays that are emerging from lack of practice.
- **Social isolation and peer rejection:**
- **Poor self esteem** and self perception as children find it difficult to differentiate between being bright and having difficulties with organisation.
- **Frustrated parents and teachers:**

## What type of therapy is recommended for organisation difficulties?

If your child has difficulties with organisation, it is recommended they consult an Occupational Therapist.

If there are multiple areas of concern (i.e. beyond just organisation) both Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy may well be recommended to address the functional areas of concern. This is the benefit of choosing Kid Sense which provides both Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy.

Contact us today to make an initial enquiry or book an assessment for your child  
on 1800 KID SENSE (1800 543 736)

