

Teaching Organizational Skills for Academic Success

Practical Strategies for Building Student Independence and Executive Functioning Skills

Purpose & Overview

This worksheet helps educators understand how to explicitly teach organizational skills to students with disabilities. Many students struggle academically not because they do not understand the content, but because they have difficulty managing materials, following routines, tracking assignments, breaking tasks into steps, or remembering what to do next.

Organizational skills are part of executive functioning and often need to be taught directly, modeled repeatedly, and supported through visuals, routines, checklists, and consistent feedback. This worksheet is designed to help teachers identify student needs, provide practical strategies, and create classroom systems that support academic success.

Why Organizational Skills Matter

Students who struggle with organization may:

- Lose assignments, folders, notebooks, or materials
- Forget homework or upcoming due dates
- Have messy binders, desks, lockers, or digital files
- Struggle to begin tasks independently
- Miss steps in multi-step assignments
- Turn in incomplete work
- Become overwhelmed by long-term projects
- Depend heavily on adult reminders

For students with disabilities, these challenges may affect access to instruction, work completion, independence, confidence, and overall academic progress.

Key Organizational Skills to Teach

1. Managing Materials

Students need systems for keeping track of binders, folders, notebooks, pencils, devices, and assignments.

Example Strategy:

Use color-coded folders for each subject.

Example:

Red = Math

Blue = ELA

Green = Science

Yellow = Social Studies

Teacher prompt:

“Before we leave class, place today’s math worksheet in your red folder on the ‘unfinished work’ side.”

2. Tracking Assignments

Students need support knowing what is due, when it is due, and where to turn it in.

Example Strategy:

Use a weekly assignment tracker.

Assignment	Subject	Due Date	Materials Needed	Completed?
Vocabulary Practice	ELA	Friday	Notebook, pencil	Yes/No
Math Review	Math	Thursday	Calculator, worksheet	Yes/No

3. Breaking Tasks Into Steps

Students may become overwhelmed when assignments have several parts.

Example Strategy:

Use a task checklist.

Example: Writing Assignment Checklist

- Read the prompt
 - Underline what the prompt is asking
 - Brainstorm ideas
 - Write topic sentence
 - Add 2 details
 - Check spelling and punctuation
 - Turn in assignment
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4. Managing Time

Students may not understand how long tasks will take or how to prioritize work.

Example Strategy:

Use timers, visual schedules, and “first-then-next” supports.

Example:

First: Complete 5 math problems

Then: Check answers with partner

Next: Turn in worksheet

Classroom Scenario

Scenario:

Marcus is a 7th-grade student with an IEP for Specific Learning Disability. He often forgets to turn in completed work and loses papers between classes. His grades are low, but when the teacher works with him one-on-one, he can complete the assignments.

What Marcus May Need:

Marcus may need support with materials management, assignment tracking, and end-of-class routines.

Possible Supports:

- A labeled homework folder
 - A daily planner check before dismissal
 - A “turn-in” reminder on his desk
 - Teacher check-in twice per week
 - A checklist for packing materials
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Teacher Practice Activity

Choose one student who struggles with organization.

Student Need:

The student struggles with: _____

Current Challenge:

What is the student having difficulty managing?

Support Strategy:

What tool, routine, or checklist could help?

Teacher Prompt or Script:

What will you say to help the student use the strategy?

How often will you monitor progress?

Organizational Skills Support Menu

<i>Student Need</i>	<i>Possible Support</i>
<i>Loses papers</i>	Color-coded folders or binder sections
<i>Forgets assignments</i>	Weekly assignment tracker
<i>Struggles to start work</i>	First-then checklist
<i>Misses assignment steps</i>	Step-by-step task checklist
<i>Forgets materials</i>	End-of-class packing checklist
<i>Turns in incomplete work</i>	“Check before you submit” checklist
<i>Struggles with long projects</i>	Break project into mini-deadlines
<i>Needs frequent reminders</i>	Visual cue card or desk reminder

Daily Organization Checklist Template

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

<i>Organization Skill</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Not Yet</i>	<i>Teacher Notes</i>
<i>Brought needed materials to class</i>	☐	☐	

<i>Wrote down assignment/homework</i>	☐	☐	
<i>Placed papers in correct folder/binder</i>	☐	☐	
<i>Used checklist or planner</i>	☐	☐	
<i>Completed required task steps</i>	☐	☐	
<i>Turned in finished work</i>	☐	☐	
<i>Packed materials before leaving class</i>	☐	☐	

Student Reflection:

One thing I did well today was:

One thing I need to improve tomorrow is:

Reflection Questions for Educators

1. Which organizational skill do my students struggle with most often?

2. What routine can I teach more explicitly?

3. What visual support, checklist, or tracker could help students become more independent?

4. How can I gradually reduce adult reminders over time?

Key Takeaway

Organizational skills should not be assumed. They must be taught, practiced, reinforced, and monitored. When educators provide clear routines, visuals, checklists, and consistent feedback, students are more likely to complete work, manage responsibilities, and experience academic success.

