ADDITUDE
Strategies and Support *for* ADHD & LD



3 Rules for Organizing Your Child

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OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND — MANY DISORGANIZATION problems in children with ADHD stem from this truism. Thanks to ADHD-related problems with focus and working memory, the things that are no longer visible are quickly forgotten.

That's why we need to harness the power of visuals to keep children organized. By externalizing information, we relieve our kids from the pressure of keeping all the details in their heads and the risk of forgetting. Begin by considering these visual tools (and rules for using them):

1 Checklists for Multi-Step Routines

Multi-step directions stress ADHD brains. Checklists more easily guide children through the steps of a complex routine — be it for morning, bedtime, or homework — by establishing sequence and breaking down daunting tasks into smaller parts. Rules for a good checklist include:

> **Keep it short and simple;** too many steps will overwhelm.
> **List steps chronologically.**
> **List steps clearly;** avoid vague instructions.
> **Include images of tasks** to illustrate what your child should be doing (and the end result).
> **Encourage your child to check off completed tasks** for a dopamine boost.
> **Mix it up!** Display checklists in several formats, like printouts, sticky notes, and other mediums that grab your child's attention.

2 Whiteboards for Family Calendars

Use a large whiteboard to display important events and tasks like sports and extracurriculars; homework and projects; chores; and family activities. Color-code a large whiteboard by person and consider creating several if one is too crowded. Other tips include:

> **Place whiteboards in a central, easy-to-find location** (like the kitchen or living room).
> **Your child's routine should include checking the board** daily (or several times a day, depending on how your family uses the board.
> **Keep markers (and erasers) nearby** to encourage active participation.
> **Use whiteboards** in conjunction with checklists for extra support.

3 Color-Coded Lists of Expectations

Children with ADHD benefit from clear and consistent guidelines for behavior, responsibilities, screen time, and everything in between. When children are consistently reminded of what is expected of them, it helps them build the mental scaffolding that strengthens their executive functioning, keeps them organized, and makes their lives easier.

> **List all household rules and expectations** for each family member in a prominent location.
> **Make sub-lists as needed** (e.g. one for kitchen rules, one for the living room, etc.).
> **Get creative.** Rotate colors and supplement the list of rules with pictures, reminders on electronic devices, etc.
> **Revisit rules and expectations regularly;** update as necessary.

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