



momsense

Saving grace

Do you spend too much time chasing your tail?
These organizational tips will help you save time and stress.

Does this sound familiar? "Mom, where's my sock/guitar/soccer ball?" or "I have three lunches to make and the school bus will be here in five minutes!" With the school year underway, now is the perfect time to bring some order into your home and keep needless stress-producers at bay.

What's the biggest time waster and stress producer? For us, it's looking for stuff. Stuff we need and stuff our kids need. Right now. For advice on how to stay on top of the gear and paperwork of parenting, we turned to professional organizer Kerri Lewin of Clutterbug.ca, a company that provides organizing solutions for every area of the home or office by helping families establish systems that can reduce stress and save time.

"There are fun and creative ways to de-clutter your schedule, your space and your life," says Kerri. "Conquering the chaos is one thing – the most important is to stop it from coming back!" But beware, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. It's best to think of organization as an ongoing process that requires daily maintenance.

Here are Kerri's top tips for busy families to save time and stress.

Food prep

- Plan and post a weekly lunch menu with your kids. This avoids all-too frequent indecision about what to prepare and forces you to have the correct supplies on hand.
- Create an easy access snack drawer or cupboard space. Group pre-packed portions or packaged snacks, utensils, small containers, thermos and lunch bag storage.
- Pre-cut fruits/veggies and store for quick snacks and lunch fillers.
- Pack lunches the night before.

Schedules

- Establish daily before/after school routines. Include homework, instrument practice time, reading, TV/computer time, family and free time.
- Attach a two-sided travel nametag to backpacks to list your child's schedule and reminders. For example, Monday/Thursday-Gym clothes, Tuesday-Library book, Friday-Home Reading bag.
- Use clear bins or separate backpacks/bags for each extra-curricular activity for easy access and inventory.

Stuff

- Use a mini table top filer in the kitchen with tabs such as "Action" for school forms; "To Read" for school letters and notices and "Activities/Schedules". Also include tabs for coupons, take-out menus and even stuff just for you.
- Designate a space for school and artwork throughout the year. Recycle the obvious, display and rotate the favourites and put the rest in a drawer or bin for year-end review. Sort again keeping journals and favourite pieces for a memory box.
- Label everything! A kindergarten classroom has labels everywhere and it works for a reason. A clearly identified "home" for things will encourage you not to fall into the habit of stuffing it into the wrong spot!

As Mark Twain once said, "The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks – and then starting the first one."

Sock drawer – here we come! 🌈

Andrea and Lianne co-founded WhereParentsTalk.com and co-host Parents Talk on Rogers TV. Together they have produced several award-winning parenting DVDs and web videos.



Feeling overwhelmed by your stuff?
You are not alone. Consider these stats:

23% ➤ Harris Interactive Polling reports that 23% of adults say they pay bills late (and incur fees) because they lose them.

If you rent a storage facility to store your excess belongings, you're contributing to a \$154 billion industry – bigger than the Hollywood film business!

40% ➤ According to the National Soap and Detergent Association, getting rid of clutter would eliminate 40 percent of housework in the average home.

**WANT TO
SEE HOW IT'S
DONE?**



Visit ParentsCanada.com and watch Kerri Lewin of clutterbug.ca in action.