

My Favorite Organizing Tips

- Have activity bags
 - In your soccer bag have all the equipment, uniform, cleats, water bottle, snack, first aid kit, etc... whatever you need for soccer & then each practice and game there is no searching.
 - When you do laundry put practice clothes/uniform RIGHT back in that bag.
 - In a church bag you could have your Bible (even if you access it everyday or multiple times per day putting it in here assures you won't forget it Sunday), quiet kid activities (if they attend service with you), Kleenex, Sunday school books, etc... then if you need to give someone at church something you can slip it into your Sunday bag, as not to forget it on Sunday.
 - Mending bag – put all mending in here and when you have time do it all.
 - Dry cleaning bag – again put all dry cleaning in here and on your designated drop off date you can take it all.
- Have hooks at your front door that EVERYONE in the house can reach (might mean having two or three sets at variable levels on the wall) – put your activity bags, coats, backpacks, purses, etc... here.
- A peg rack or hooks in the bathroom work better in assuring kids will hang up their towels (even my little one can do this) versus a towel rack – it also holds more towels this way.
- Have a box labeled “Missing Items” and when you find a stray screw, a sock with no match, an empty DVD case, a puzzle piece, etc... put them in this box, so when someone is looking for that mismatched sock, screw, etc... you can direct them to ONE spot. (I have to clean mine out periodically and accept that the dryer must've ate that one sock.)
 - When one sock in our house gets a hole I put the other one in my “Missing Items” box (only if we have multiples of that type/color of sock) and so when another pair gets a hole I can match up the two *un-holey* socks and not have to throw away as many socks... hope this makes sense.
 - I keep mine in the laundry room.
- Put a grocery list on the fridge and as you run out of things encourage yourself & family members to check off/highlight what you need.
- I have found the easier you make it for kids to put away their toys the more likely they'll do it!
 - I use kitty litter pans (clean of course) to put books in (facing outward) – then kids can flip through the covers of books and not make a mess of a traditionally stacked bookcase looking for

the book they want – also even a one year old can put away a book this way.

- I use large storage shelves in my kids' toy room & I put like toys together in *clear, plastic bins* with a printed picture (clip art or an actual picture, printed on full sheet labels) on the front.
 - I took a picture of each of my child's rooms clean *the way I like it* and then I laminated the picture. I let me kids use these as a guide for what I mean by "clean up your room".
 - We have morning and bedtime routines posted at our house the following way:
 - I took a picture of each child *doing* the chore and then used a Publisher program on my computer to make each picture a small square and then next to it write the chore (in order). Each child has an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper (laminated) on the fridge for morning and bedtime. Then even my non reader can figure out what she is to do next.
 - I have a "color" assigned for both my girls, so when someone does not clean up I know EXACTLY who it was and there is also no fighting over whose _____ it was - I use it the following ways:
 - Bins to store clothes
 - Towels
 - If you don't want to do colors you could just have each towel embroidered with a child's name.
 - Toothbrushes
 - Water bottles
 - Each of my girls uses different colored toothpaste – that way when someone does not rinse out the sink I know EXACTLY who did it! It keeps them accountable too.
 - When the toy rooms is an overwhelming mess I have found that if I ask each child to begin my picking up a *specific* type of toy (blocks, puzzles, dolls, etc...) they get more focused and can do it this way.
- Label everything!
 - Even my fridge shelves are labeled.
 - To keep my menu & recipes sorted nicely I use a binder
 - I have sections for Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Dessert & To Try, & Tried & True (this is where I put my play dough recipe, bread recipe, etc...)
 - I put each recipe in a sheet protector & in its coordinating section.
 - I even copy the recipes I am going to use from books, as not to dirty my books and so I can have just *one* place to reference all month

- As I come across recipes I want to try over the month I put it in a blank sheet protector in the “to try” section and I reference this section when I make next month’s menu.
 - In the front (my binder has a small pocket on the inside front & back) I have the school lunch calendar for that month and that is where I reference it.
 - I write on it in permanent marker *over* the entire date which days my daughter has cold lunch – then each night/week I reference it to see what that week I need to make for her or how much money to send with her.
 - In the back I have blank grocery lists to fill out when I plan next month’s menu.
 - The first page in the binder (before any of the sections) is my monthly menu.
- Keep cards & small presents on hand so if there is a birthday party, new baby, someone is sick & you want to send a “get well”, etc... you don’t have to go to the store all the time. I even keep some gift cards ready in my card box.
 - You have to be careful with this one because you can keep too much or forget about it and then it does you NO good.
- Have a designated memory box, kids’ school work/art work box and when it fills up, go through and purge things versus getting another container.
 - Remember we don’t want to burden our children with HUGE boxes of memorabilia when they are older – when they get such massive amounts none of it will stand out or be that important.
 - If you really need to keep the memories alive journal – that will be more valuable than any art work, trophy, and napkin from a wedding, etc...
- Use a scanner to scan in and virtually organize articles you like or want to reference, art work you want, newspaper clippings, etc... then organize them by folders you designate on your computer.
 - Then there is no cumbersome paper trail.
- Organize your digital photos on your computer by:
 - Having year folders (2002, 2003, 2004, etc...)
 - Then subfolders for each three months or season (January – March, April – June, July – September, October – December or Winter (Jan, Feb, Dec), Spring (Mar, Apr, May), Summer (June, July, August), Fall (Sep, Oct, Nov).
 - Then when you want to access the lake photos from 2002 you know it is in the summer folder or at least you just have to look through the April – June or July – September folders.

- You can further subdivide photos into folder categories.
 - Camping – July 2002
 - Grandparents visit – December 2007
- Tight on bathroom counter space or need somewhere to store gloves in the coat closet.
 - Use a over the door shoe organizer (I got a 48 pocket one from Wal Mart)
 - Put all toothpaste & toothbrushes in one section, hair styling items in another, hair brushes, bath soaps, etc...
 - In the bottom pocket of mine I keep cleaning supplies (my kids are old enough to not get into them & I use organic cleaners & vinegar so it is not a safety issue in our home) and when the kids take a bath I can quickly clean the bathroom.
 - In the coat closet I have one and I put (in the top pockets) sunscreen, mosquito repellent, chalk, bubbles, etc... Then I have umbrellas (small compact ones), my husband's hats, gloves, etc..., my winter gear & in the lower pockets (where my kids can reach) I have their gloves, hats, etc...
 - You could use on in the:
 - Pantry
 - Laundry room
 - Toy room
 - Kids room
 - Garage