

Getting Organized.

What does that phrase mean to you?

What do you think it means to your parents or the adults in your home?

What do you think it means to an employer?

Organization seems to be a hot topic. People everywhere are asking you to get organized... At school, at home, and especially at work. Sometimes it seems like being organized and being a teenager are opposite ends of the world. After all, you have the rest of your life to get organized, right? Being a teenager is about living in the moment, having fun, doing stuff on a whim, and keeping your schedule as open as you can so you are available for whatever comes next. So what seems to happen, is that teenagers see this equation...

ORGANIZED = TOO MUCH RESPONSIBILITY = LACK OF FREEDOM = ADULTHOOD = BORING!

If you do indeed think the above statement is true... it's a pretty fair assumption on your part. Because a lot of adults carry responsibility like they are carrying around a 9,000 pound elephant on their shoulders. They complain; they are tired; they are stressed; they don't have any fun. They probably want you to get organized so they can give you more responsibility and lighten their own load a little. But you are watching them and they seem miserable. So you avoid being organized as long as possible... because when you do finally get organized, it means you have to be responsible. And obviously that is NO FUN from what you see. You are a smart person. So, it doesn't take long for you to figure out that getting organized may very well mean getting miserable!

Over the next few pages, let's try to paint a little bit different picture of Organization for you. Let's try to see if we can find some good in it!

Organization... what does it mean?

Sometimes, it's easier to understand a concept when you break it down or look at it from another angle.

What are some other words that mean organized?

Putting in order	Categorizing
Arranging	Putting together
Sorting out	Assembling
Classifying	Systemizing

Which one do you like? Pick the word you are most comfortable with and use it from now on in this lesson when you see a box like this one... ~~organization~~

It will help you shift your focus from a word you may not like to something that fits you a little better! A change in perspective can really help.

Before we go any further, let's take a quick look at some of the BENEFITS of being organized .

- Being organized can actually help you get MORE free time.
- Being organized will get adults off your case.
- Being organized will help you get respect from adults faster.
- Being organized will help you get places on time.
- Being organized will lower your stress level.
- What else?

The thing about ~~organization~~ is this... there are as lots of ways to do it. People's methods of getting organized are almost as unique as the their fingerprints. So what one person sees as organized is not often the same as what the next person will see. If you dropped a deck of cards on the ground, and someone asked you to pick them up and organize them... how would you do it? Face up or face down? By color, by suite, or by number? In one pile or several?

It's important, first to learn about your personal style of ~~organization~~ , because what already comes natural to you will be the easiest way to start.

How do you your music? By artist? By Genre? Another way?

Why?

Recording information...

When you need to remember something, how do you do it?

Why?

How does that work for you?

What kind of information do you need to record to make your life easier?

- Tests
- When assignments are due
- Work schedule
- Errands
- Dates
- What else?

Writing things down in a way that *works* is really helpful... If it *works*, it means you can find where you wrote it quickly and use the info easily... is an important step in organization
 Lots of people use a day planner or a calendar, which you can find at your local office store or general retail store. You can spend \$5 or you can spend \$105, it doesn't really matter as long as it works for you.

When looking at a Planner, be sure to check out the following things.

- ❖ Is it laid out by day, month, or week?
 - This will usually determine the size of the planner and how much detail you can actually write in the spaces. Think about what you will be writing and how much room you need.
- ❖ Will it fit in my backpack, purse, or shoulder bag?
 - If it won't fit somewhere pretty easily, you probably won't take it with you.
- ❖ Do I like the way it looks?
 - A Planner can become part of your life, so pick one you like!

If you know, in all honesty, you won't carry a Planner around, try something different to record information you need. Most cell phones have a calendar in them that allows you to record information for specific dates. You probably have your cell phone with you all the time, so this might be a good way to keep track of important info. If the phone you have now doesn't have a calendar, next time you trade phones, try to get one that does. You'll find the calendar in a Razr™ under settings>tools>datebook. You can then choose the week or month. It let's you name the entry, the time, the date, the duration, etc. You can even set an alarm to remind yourself! This is an excellent way to get organized !

Prioritizing... What comes first?

When you need to prioritize something, how do you do it? In other words, how do you decide what is most important to least important?

How does that work for you? In other words, do you seem to stay in pretty good working order from day to day?

What kind of information do you need to prioritize to make your life easier?

- Time with my friends
- Family responsibilities
- Work schedule
- School work
- What else?

If you have three or four responsibilities to do, how do you decide which one to do first, then next, then next?

A good way to prioritize or decide which thing is most important to do *first*, is to ask the person who gave you the responsibility. If the task is something for yourself, you can decide. And if the task is for someone else, like a teacher, a boss, a parent, or a friend, ask that person about the time frame.

- “How soon do you need it?”
- “What is the latest you need it?”

This will give you an idea about how to arrange the things you are supposed to be doing in an order that works! It will also help you lower your stress because you won’t be trying to do everything at the same time.

Now sometimes it happens that several people tell you their task is first, and you find yourself with four things to do all at once! This can be super-stressful. When you find yourself in this situation, take a minute to consider the following points.

- Who asked for your help first?
- Who will understand and be most open-minded if their task is late?
- When you look at each task one by one, which one seems most important to your personal well-being? (For example, will you get a bad grade at school? Will you get fired at work? Etc.)

{helpful hint: if you decide to something can wait, be sure to talk to the person involved and explain the situation. He or she will respond much more positively if they know in advance you are trying!}

What do *you* look for in a responsible person?

What's your most important possession in the world? Name something you take really good care of and place a high value on...

Now think about it... Think about how much you enjoy it. What it means to you. How you prioritize it in your life. Now imagine you have to go away for a while. Where you are going, you CANNOT take your most prized possession with you. You have to leave it behind, but you get to choose one person to take care of it for you.

Who would you pick?

1.

What qualities does this person have that causes you choose them to take care of it for you?

2.

How would you expect them to treat it?

3.

What condition would you expect it to be in when you returned?

4.

When an employer hires you, that person is giving you responsibility for their most prized possessions... their money, their customers, their equipment, their reputation, their business. They picked you to take care of it just like you chose the person in box 1 above.

- Will you display the qualities that you named in box 2?
- Can your employer expect you to treat this responsibility as you wrote about in box 3?
- Will you return the responsibility to your employer at the end of each day the way described in box 4?

What might you do differently in a job when you understand that your employer is entrusting you with their most valuable possessions?

Being organized **at work...**

Remember when trying to find a job, trying to keep the job you've got, or working hard to move up to an even better job... employers are simply looking for employees who are considerate and thoughtful about their work. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

- Ask for the supplies you need to do your job well.
- Ask for extra folders to correctly categorize your papers.
- Ask about the time frame for a task when it is given to you.
- Ask what the goal is for the task.
- Ask how they would like for it to be presented.
- Ask what you can do to be more organized from your employer's point of view.

Here are some helpful tips from employers.

Office Manager:

I believe workplace organization is a hybrid combination of prioritization and forward planning. Understanding past, present, and future needs, and having the ability to prioritize them.

Director of Human Resources:

I think my advice would be that someone entering the workplace should determine/intend that they will be proactively organized from Day 1. For example, in their first week, they will be given a lot of 'reference' information. Phone numbers, addresses, forms, etc. It's really common for a new person not to take detailed and organized notes and to disregard these initial pieces of information. Then, for the first month, they have to ask someone every time they need to know what the fax number is, or where to find a blank shipping form, how to access voicemail, etc. Being organized in these small things goes a long way toward showing consideration for new co-workers and establishing your reputation as an organized person.

Director of Sales and Sourcing:

Keep a to do list and a calendar. It amazes me how many people don't do this from the start of a new job. Older, more experienced people almost always do this, and they have "experience". Why do new, inexperienced people think they don't need one? Get a planner and use it!

Office Manager:

Be aware of 'presenting' yourself as organized. It matters that you and your work LOOK organized. Turning in a report?...are the fonts, alignment, and borders consistent? Sending an email?...would bullet points make it easier to read? Just look at the project and use good judgment.

Marketing Director:

I think it means to be able to effectively prioritize the workload, keep information compiled (physical, paper or electronic) in a manner where it is easily accessible as needed, proper follow through and alerting to supervisor / manager to delays / challenges, asking questions for any request not understood, responding to requests timely (even if the response is that a person needs more time), maintaining a good system of information flow (emails, conversations, etc.) which includes good note-taking.

Good luck!