

## Eight Golden Rules for Back to School



Back-to-School is right around the corner! It's the perfect time to take stock and get your student organized for the new school year. Here are some sure fire tips for starting off the school year on track.

Use an academic planner to stay organized. Whether you use a paper planner or electronic calendar, make sure your planner is set up as a grid system so you can see your week at a glance. Record all your after school activities, weekend commitments, class assignments and projects so you can "visualize" your available time to get your homework and studying done. Include a row in the planner for "Organizing" so that you can plan your locker, knapsack and binder clean outs. Maintenance is key to getting AND staying organized.

Make a to-do list every day. Put the hardest or longest task at the top and do that one first. You will feel a sense of accomplishment when you have tackled the hardest "to-do" first. You will also tackle those difficult tasks with a "full tank of gas".

Set achievable goals. You are more likely to be complete your tasks if they are broken down into manageable parts. It is much easier to write one paragraph for your essay in an afternoon than it is to complete the entire term paper. Check your planner for available pockets of time and schedule accordingly. Setting unrealistic goals sets you up for failure.

Free Gifts. Free periods and study halls are gifts! Use them! Focus on your assignments and to-do list in your planner.

Keep your work with you. You can always get an assignment done whether you are on the bus after an away game or at a doctor's appointment. Be mindful of your time robbers!

Organize your environment. It is just as important to have your bedroom, study area or back pack organized. Organizing these zones will help you stay on schedule and focused. By keeping your areas organized you will avoid the dreaded "I am looking for that science lab to hand in and I have no idea where it is!"

School holidays: Use your down time during school breaks or conference days to get a jump start on your long term



assignments and projects. Better to work on these important assignments when you don't have the extra pressure of homework, activities, etc.

Set up a special organizing system that works for you. It's easy to get overwhelmed by the amount of papers, homework sheets, handouts, etc. that take over your school life. Use a master binder, accordion file or individual notebooks or folders to corral papers. Make sure the system is easy to use and maintain.

Leslie Josel

Leslie is the Principal of Order Out of Chaos, an organizing consulting firm specializing in student organizing and chronic disorganization. She is a national speaker and has also created the "Academic Planner: A Tool for Time Management" for middle and high school students. Connect with Leslie at [www.orderoochaos.com](http://www.orderoochaos.com)

