



the organized mom



With a handy basket, you'll never forget another errand

should be in its own place, and you won't forget anything on your way out.

Basket of sanity

Amy Knapp, creator of the datebook-style Amy Knapp's Family Organizer 2004 and a mom of two, ages 7 and 5, places a wicker shopping basket by her door. Everything she needs for routine errands and chores—from library books to small mending projects—goes inside. She brings the basket with her whenever she leaves the house. This way, she never forgets a task and also has a project to tackle if she gets stuck waiting in line.

the school shuffle

When your toddler spills juice all over her clothes just before you have to leave, is it a crisis or merely a pesky setback? To keep it the latter:

Versatility is key Mosette Annals Bailey of Silver Springs, Maryland, is careful about the clothing she buys for her 2-year-old son: "I make sure a shirt will go with at least three bottoms before I get it."

The morning rush Find wardrobe basics by pulling together your kid's outfit the night before. Rachel Dickins, 7, and 6-year-old would rather watch TV than get dressed in their bedrooms, so the Freeville, New York,

family member put his or her socks and underwear. She also uses laundry markers to put different color dots on the tags of her kids' clothes so as they come out of the dryer, she'll know instantly what belongs to whom. To help save time in the morning, I also place my kids' clothes in their dressers already sorted into matching outfits.

Tackling toys See-through bins and boxes with lids will save you from toy chaos. Put cars in one bin, blocks in another, dolls in a third.

Catchall In our playroom and the kids' room, I also keep a large, empty plastic tub with a lid. If we don't have the time to sort toys one day, we can sweep them all into the larger container, and at least they're out of sight.

The launch pad That's what DeBroof calls the space by your door where you should have a crier or contraband—a basket for shoes, clothes or kid-height books for backpacks, and file folders or boxes for mail and your child's school papers. When you get home, everything

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After-school specials Whether it's gymnastics or swimming lessons, designate a bag for each child's activity. "We use a big duffel that holds my son's helmet, pads, shoes—everything he needs for peewee football, plus an extra pair of socks," says Amy Knapp. "After I wash his jersey and pants, I stick them straight into the bag instead of putting them away in his drawer."

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mom moved a bureau into the living room and dedicated one drawer of clothes per kid. "Now everyone wins, they can watch cartoons while they're putting on their clothes, and they're always wearing what I want them to wear because that's what they find in their drawers," she says.

Ten-minute warning If you need to leave the house at 7:50 A.M., set a timer for 7:40, suggests Kathy Peck, author of *The Family Manager*. Take Charge and a mom of three. "When it goes off, it's the signal for your kids to kick into a higher gear to finish their morning activities: brushing their teeth, feeding the dog, getting their shoes on. You can list everything they need to accomplish on a

"Go" chart, just like a chore chart. **The art museum** Even though he's still only in childcare, Ben creates an average of two masterpieces per day. To handle the influx of art:

• Tack a colorful ribbon to the wall with clips (obedience-style) for changing art displays.

• Help your child edit his own work by asking him to pick his favorites and toss the rest.

• Get rid of some quietly after he's gone to bed—he'll be none the wiser.

Special delivery Every few months, while the collection down even further by having your child choose a few "treasures," then tell her how excited Grandma will be to see the rest of her wonderful work. To

gether, you can put the art in a mailing tube, color and label it, and take it to the post office.

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on the job

To ease workdays—and the witching hour before dinner:

Hiding place Have a home office? Keep yourself invisible by having a small cooler of drinks and snacks at your work space so you don't get distracted by your kids every time you head for the fridge.

Traveling solo Get errands done during lunch—everything's easier and easier when the kids aren't with you. Does your workplace have a fridge? When Pam Kramer's kids, now 18 and 12, were younger, the Littleton, Colorado, mom shopped for a handful of dinner items midday, leaving the few perishables she bought clearly marked in the office refrigerator. "This wasn't the big weekly shopping trip," she says, "but it sure beat picking up the kids at daycare and then heading to the store."

Now that you've gotten yourself in order, if only you could get your husband and your kids to be as organized as you are! ■

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