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INSIDE:

Fall Into Place

7 Invigorating Walks
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Back-to-School Tips



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Ask the Expert

June Saruwatari, co-host of The Learning Channel's *Home Made Simple*, eases you into back-to-school mode. **BY CHARLES SLACK**

June Saruwatari is so serious about organizing that she calls herself "The Organizing Maniac." Here are some of her solutions to life's all-too-familiar school-year headaches.



your kids organization if you're running around frantically searching for your keys and cell phone every morning. Keep those things in a basket where you can always find them.

How can we defuse that mad morning scramble to get lunches made, kids dressed, and everybody out the door at the same time?

Most of those morning emergencies are things that could have been taken care of the night before. Have a checklist of everything that needs to be done, and train your brain to go down that list each morning. Outfits should be picked out and ready to go in the same place every day. Backpacks should be hanging on hooks in their place, with homework already inside. You can prepare most of the lunches the night before. If you plan to make anything in the morning, put all of the ingredients in one place, especially if the kids are helping. And lead by example. You can't teach

The kitchen table gets so loaded with papers, art projects, and other stuff that we barely have room to eat.

Art supplies, homework materials, fliers—all these things need a designated home. Set a family rule that the table is community space that must be cleared as soon as someone is finished using it. Otherwise, just getting ready for dinner is a huge, unmanageable chore.

We have at least one lost homework crisis per day. Help!

Papers left on tables, desks, or counters are bound to get lost. Every child's school notebook should have a plastic binder pocket (or, one pocket for each subject if

the child is older) that they can slip papers into without using a hole punch. Train your kids to put their homework "home" as soon as it's done, or even if they get interrupted and need to finish later. Use the same system, in reverse, for any messages from school. These should all go in the same pocket and it should be your child's responsibility to see that you get them.

With writing assignments, online research, instant messaging, and games, the kids fight for control of the computer every waking moment.

Keyboard time should be allotted in advance. If Stacy gets the computer one hour, Bill gets it the next. Be firm enough so that each child knows to start wrapping up five minutes before time is up, but flexible enough that they can negotiate for extra time for special circumstances, such as when a school project is due. This is a great way to teach time management, and also how to respect and honor other people's time.

Being organized sounds like a lot of work.

Actually, the opposite is true. It takes a little time to set up your system, but once it's working it'll flow easily and seamlessly, like a well-oiled machine. All you'll have to do is refine it once in a while. Kids love structure. And when your own mind's not filled with a thousand stray things that you need to do next, you'll be relaxed and able to get more out of life's moments as they happen.

For more about June Saruwatari, visit her Web site organizingmaniac.com or catch her on *Home Made Simple*. For show times, see homemadesimple.com.

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