



A+ Test Prep and Tutoring Newsletter

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Back-to-School Organizing Tips



The beginning of a new school year offers an excellent opportunity to help your son or daughter get organized for success. Getting organized goes beyond purchasing the necessary school supplies--it means helping him or her create habits and establish systems for managing their "stuff." Here are some helpful tips:

- **Figure out the problem.** If your child is generally disorganized, loses assignments, or can't locate a certain notebook or handout, step back and help her analyze what is wrong. Is she just scribbling down homework assignments in random places that she can't easily access later? Consider buying her a daily planner to record all assignments in one place. If she is losing pieces of paper, be sure she has a folder for every subject for loose papers and handouts.
- **Color-coordinate school supplies whenever possible.** Make blue be for French, yellow for math, etc., so that all folders, spiral notebooks, and binders or notebook dividers within a binder are that same color. If your school requires that textbooks be covered, use book covers in that same color (or get creative and decorate a brown-paper bag cover in that color or theme). That way, your student will associate that color with a particular subject and be able to locate her materials more quickly.
- **Take inventory of your child's gear with him or her.** Is his bookbag large enough to accommodate all of his stuff? Or are there so many different compartments that he must look in three different places before he finds what he is looking for? Are pencils, pens, highlighters, and erasers scattered everywhere? Buy a pencil case for these small items. Does your teen need multiple 1-subject notebooks or would a couple of 3-subject notebooks work better? Does she need two 1-inch binders or one 2-inch binder?
- **Cut down on distractions!** Develop good work habits by insisting that no television, radio, iPod, cell phones, or other devices be used during homework time. If your teen must use the computer for homework to do research or write a paper, have him disengage the instant messaging feature. These constant "social" interruptions from well-meaning friends cause a student to lose focus and eat up valuable time.
- **Time management.** Set aside a consistent time of day for your student to do homework. It does not have to be as soon as he or she walks in the door. In fact, a little "down" time for a snack, watching some TV, or getting some fresh air can provide a much needed "breather" from the school day. If your student seems to be spending too much time on schoolwork or is not able to complete all of his work, you may need to intervene and discuss with him, and possibly his teacher (s), what the problem is.
- **Location, location, location.** Provide a clutter-free, well-lit place for your student to study. Be flexible. For one student, working in one's room at a desk may work well, but that may prove too distracting for another student, so working at the dining room table may be a better option.



Brian Gillin

Brian Gillin has worked as a tutor for A+ Test Prep and Tutoring for more than seven years, making him one of the most "senior" tutors on our team, despite his relative youth. Brian graduated in 1994 from Villanova University with a degree in Business Administration and a minor in Psychology. He draws on his educational background in tutoring SAT and ACT math and verbal prep, as well as some levels of high-school math.

In addition to his work at A+, Brian is a homebound instructor for Marple Newtown School District, where he previously served as a theme editor. He is also a correspondent and sports editor for Press Newspapers of Delaware County, where he covers mainly high-school athletics.

Brian also finds time to enjoy the arts. He is currently the president of the Marple Newtown Community Band, where he plays the trumpet. He has been part of pit orchestras as well, and has done the "open-mic night thing" with a guitar at local coffee shops. This multi-faceted tutor has also acted in community theater, most recently in the



The College Board has recently announced a very important change to its SAT score-reporting policy. Up until now, a student could not select which SAT or SAT Subject Test scores to send to colleges. Scores from ALL tests were sent collectively to the schools to which students applied. Since many students sit for the SAT several times and take multiple SAT Subject Tests, this policy did not allow for the possibility of "hiding" less than favorable scores from prospective colleges.

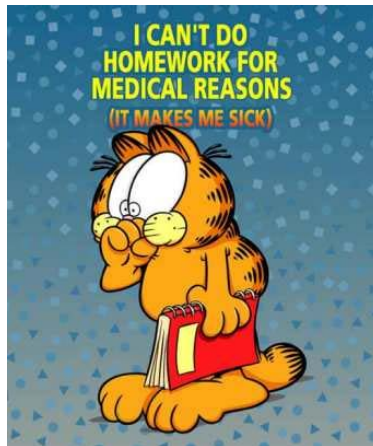
However, the College Board has reported that it is modifying its score-reporting policy as of March 2009 to allow students, at no additional charge, to send to colleges only those scores that best represent their abilities. This new policy will empower students more and thereby eliminate some of the stress associated with the college application process. It is important to note, though, that only entire scores from a specified test date may be sent. Scores from individual sections of the SAT from different test dates may not be combined. Through this optional feature, students can select one, several, or all test scores to be sent to an institution, but if a student does not indicate his preference, all scores will be sent.

For more information, [follow](#)

Marple Newtown Players production of *Sherlock Holmes*, and has written a few one-act plays that have been copyrighted and performed locally. Brian also spends some of his free time distributing brochures for two national domestic-violence organizations that specialize in assisting male victims. [this link.](#)

With his approachable, down-to-earth style, Brian connects well with his students. And they respond to him in kind. What he enjoys most about tutoring for A+ is demystifying standardized tests for his students, who often feel quite anxious about the SAT or ACT. "Students tend to be more 'phobic' than they need to be. With regard to math, for example," he says. "They often know more than they realize they do."

Homework Help Website



[Homework Helper](#), a well regarded and comprehensive homework help website, was created in 1996 by B.J. Pinchbeck, now a college student at Drexel University.

Pinchbeck's website contains links to more than 735 different search engines and websites on subjects as diverse as foreign languages, science, math, English, computer science, art and music, and general news and media outlets. Pinchbeck has recently expanded the site to include a section for college students. Have fun browsing through the sometimes quirky offerings!

School and Community Partnerships



A+ Test Prep and Tutoring provides in-home One-to-One Test Prep and Academic Subject Tutoring throughout the Delaware Valley.

We also partner with schools and social service agencies to provide test preparation, remedial reading and math, and study skills courses to students throughout the region. Courses offered include SAT, ACT, SSAT, and ISEE. For more information please contact me at 215.886.9188.

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President