

Just Right Organizing: Start the School Year with Less Clutter and Less Stress

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
August 14 2023 1:38 PM



ALTON - School starts this week, but it doesn't have to be hectic with Kalli Erwin's advice.

Erwin, the owner of [Just Right Organizing](#), offers clean-up and organizing services to people throughout the Riverbend area. She also has two young kids and previously

worked as a guidance counselor, which means she understands how overwhelming the beginning of the school year can be. She stopped by our [Our Daily Show!](#) to share some tips on starting off the year with less clutter and less stress.

“When people hire me, I say, ‘Just tell me all the things that have been driving you crazy, and we’re going to go in and clean it up,’” Erwin said. “For me, it’s about establishing a flow. And sometimes as an outsider coming in, I can have a really good perspective on it because it’s not my home.”

[Erwin’s services](#) include in-person sessions and additional organization counseling. But in the meantime, she has some advice for busy parents and guardians who want the first day of school to go smoothly. While Erwin admits her tips are “unconventional,” she also says they’ve been “life-changing” for her family.

Tip #1: Declutter.

Maybe in an ideal world, you’d choose your outfit the night before and be ready to go as soon as your alarm goes off. But if that’s not the case, then you can at least make it easier to find what you need in the morning. Erwin suggests taking the time to organize your clothes and donate what you don’t wear so you can get dressed without the stress.

“My daughter’s sock drawer was horrendous. She had socks from infancy,” Erwin remembered. “Who wants to take the time to do that stuff? But the decluttering process, I feel like it’s way less time than you expect.”

To make it easier, set a timer for 15 minutes and go in increments. This gives you a visual representation to focus on while you go through your clothes, and it also makes it seem less daunting.

“This is all a sock drawer would take, but in my head it’s so much bigger,” Erwin said.

But with a timer and a few minutes of focus on one thing at a time, you’re more likely to knock out tasks. Your future self will thank you when you can quickly and easily get dressed tomorrow morning.

Bonus points if your clothes are organized by season. Who wants to flip through flannels when it’s already 80 degrees by 8 a.m.?

Tip #2: Designate a drop zone.

The school day is over, and your kids run inside the house, kick off their shoes, drop their backpacks, and wander into the kitchen for an afterschool snack. Not only is this space suddenly cluttered, but in the morning rush, you can't find anything.

Erwin suggests choosing a spot in your house as a “drop zone,” where you can organize everything you need to leave the house. By establishing a space and a routine, kids get in the habit of putting away their things. Leaving the house or coming home is no longer such a scramble.

“Instead of things being all over the house, as far as transitioning from inside your house to the vehicle to wherever, or transitioning from outside to inside, everything has a home,” Erwin said, adding, “We can't get frustrated with kids if we don't give them a place for everything. We can't think that they innately know.”

She has mini lockers for her children to keep their shoes and jackets. There are a lot of other options, and you can choose what's right for your family.

Tip #3: Organize your online calendar.

“This is my most controversial one, because some of my pretty organized girlfriends are so adamant about paper calendars. And I'm like, you don't even know. You don't know what you're missing,” Erwin joked.

Instead of waiting to write down important events and reminders, use a digital calendar to quickly keep track of everything. Most phones have convenient calendar apps, or you can check out Google Calendar or other services. Erwin finds them especially useful for remembering birthdays or collaborating with her husband to keep track of each other's schedules.

“If something happens to a paper calendar, you're in a bad spot,” she said. “If my phone dies, I can jump on a computer and go on my Google Calendar and I'm fine.”

It takes some practice and discipline to get in the habit of immediately writing down all your events, but Erwin believes it's worth it. Taking ten minutes at the start of the semester to type in school events or off days can also save you a lot of stress in the long run.

While these tips can make it easier, juggling school, work and childcare is hard for any guardian. Erwin's most important piece of advice is that it's always okay to...

Tip #4: Accept help.

Between soccer practices, dance recitals, meetings and whatever else you have going on, it's hard to do it all alone. Luckily, you don't have to.

“As women, back in the day we used to raise kids in communities. Things have kind of changed a little bit, so accepting help is really hard,” Erwin said. “I’ve had to learn that lesson myself. We’re making more of a shift, though. We’re moms who are accepting help and not thinking they have to do it all themselves.”

Whatever help looks like to you, Erwin encourages parents to accept it when needed and offer it when possible. It really does take a village, and that's okay.

Just Right Organizing can be a part of that community, too. For more information about Erwin's business and what she can do for you, visit the [official website](#) or [Facebook page](#).

4 BACK TO SCHOOL

Tips for an  flow at home

1 declutter

example = clothes
make sure all
clothes fit

2 drop zone

shoes+backpacks+coats

3 online
calendar

game changer for
running a busy schedule

4 accept help

examples =
rides to practices,
grocery pickup &
professional organizing

Just Right
ORGANIZING

