

**SUN** NEW HOMES & CONDOS

**DESIGN TIPS**


Designating a homework spot can help ensure assignments and supplies don't get misplaced.

# Taming back-to-school clutter

**LISA EVANS**  
Special to QMI Agency

**W**ith kids back at school, backpacks, lunchboxes, homework assignments and letters from administrators are sure to leave your home looking a little worse for wear. Toronto professional organizer Tina Blazer, owner of Spot On Organizing, says organizing your home into zones can help ensure your kids' school lives don't turn your stylish home into a clutter abyss.

## Entry Zone

"Clutter starts at the front door," says Blazer. Equip your entryway with ample hooks for backpacks and sports bags. If soccer equipment, skates and gymnastics bags are cluttering up your front closet, designate a hook or basket for each activity. If there isn't enough room at the front door, relocate these items to your child's

bedroom or basement.

Make organizing fun for kids by labelling hooks with their names and allow them to pick out colourful baskets to hold their winter and sports apparel. "If you let them help pick things out, they feel that they're part of the solution [and are more willing to use them]," says Blazer.

## Information Zone

The start of the school year can leave your home mired in paperwork. Blazer recommends keeping a bulletin board by the front door, kitchen or mudroom for letters home about school events and permission forms. "It has to be located somewhere front and center so you always see the really important pieces up there," she says.

A family calendar is another great way to stay on track. Rather than inputting everything in mom or dad's iPhone calendar app, Blazer recom-

mends a calendar called More Time Moms, made by a Canadian company. "It has lots of fun stickers for different categories and activities and it

gets the children involved so they can pull out the stickers of where there's a sports game or a dance class," says Blazer. The calendar is a great vis-



If you let your kids help pick things out, they feel that they're part of the solution and are more willing to use them.

ual for younger children who aren't yet reading but can understand the symbols, plus it contains a large pocket for forms and tickets.

## Homework Zone

Designating a homework spot can help ensure assignments and supplies don't get misplaced. While a desk in your kids' bedroom may be suitable, Blazer says even a storage ottoman in the living room or a designated cupboard in the kitchen or dining room may be appropriate for kids who like doing their homework in the family hub.

## Lunchbox Prep Zone

If your kitchen counter has become overcrowded with kids' lunch items and Tupperware containers, consider designating a drawer or empty cupboard for lunch prep. A deep lower drawer is a good option so kids can reach them and be part of help-

ing with getting their lunches ready," says Blazer.

## Artwork Zone

Back to school means you can expect to be the recipient of loads of artwork. Rather than placing all of these masterpieces on the refrigerator, organize them in a file box or an art portfolio and pick the pieces that are most sentimental to you to display.

## Clothing Zone

If you took advantage of the back-to-school deals, your kids likely have a full fall wardrobe competing for closet space. "This is a good time to look at the clothes that were worn last fall and winter and start talking to kids about whether they want to keep them," says Blazer. For items that don't make the purge pile, Blazer recommends using baskets or plastic storage containers to contain clothing overflow.