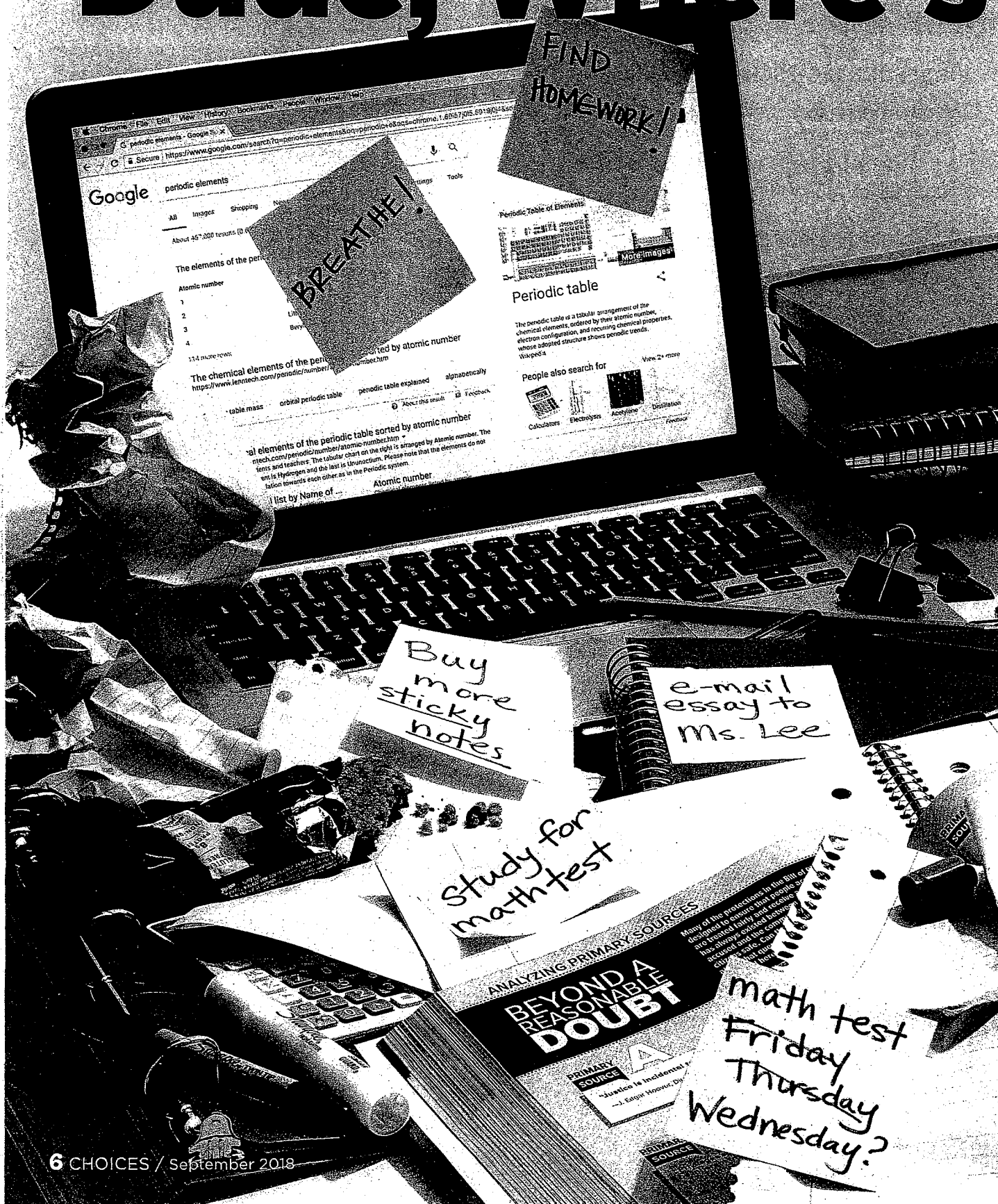


Dude, Where's



My Homework?

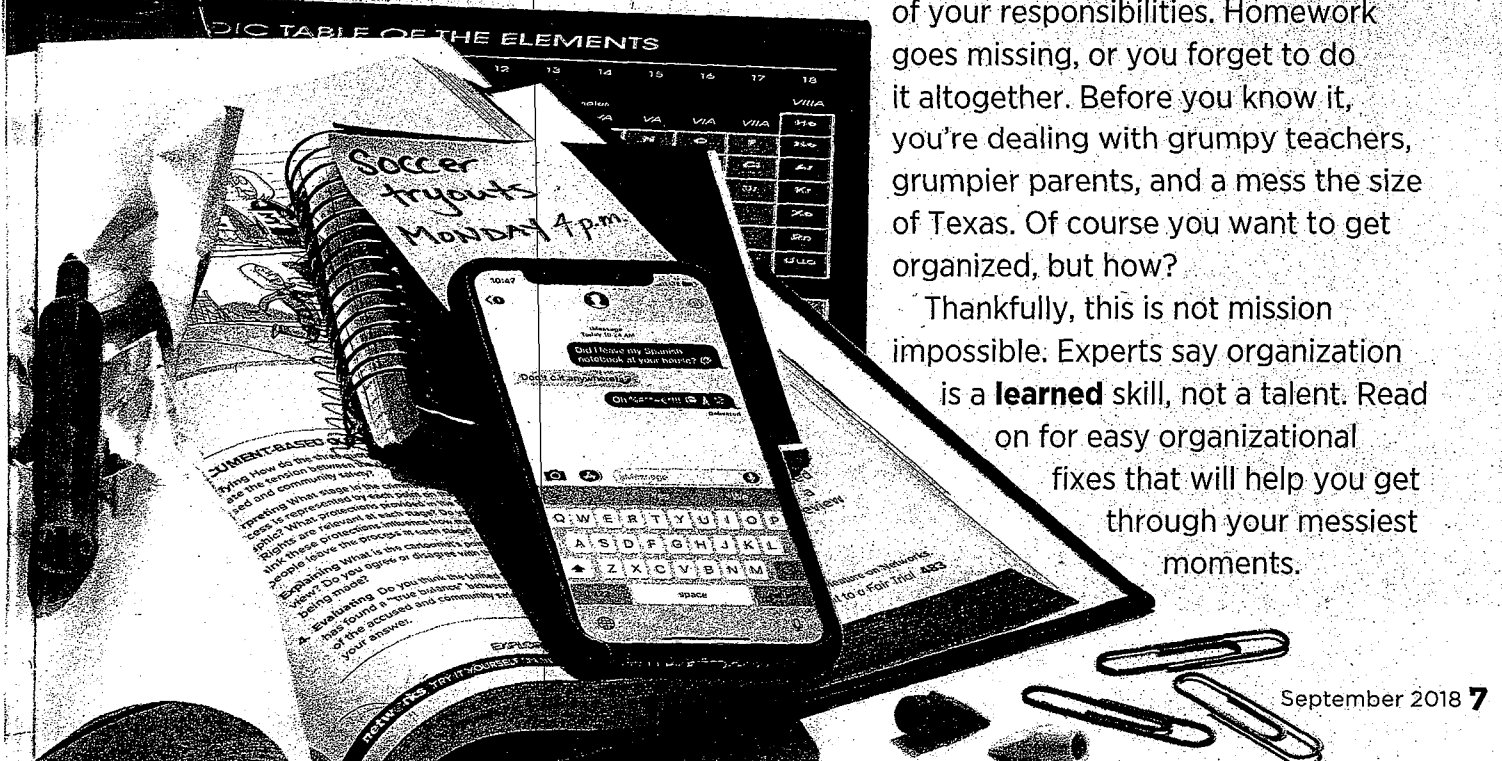
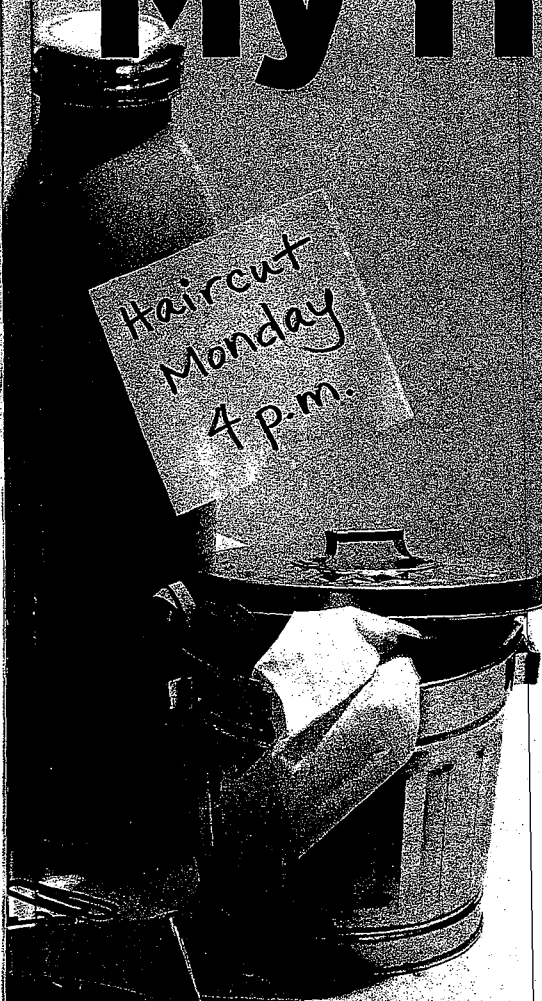
Your biology assignment is MIA, there are granola crumbs in your English book, and you 100 percent forgot to study for your math test—but that's only the tip of the disorganization iceberg. Ready to clean up your act? Read on.

By ANDREA BARTZ • Photography by LEVI BROWN

You've already spent 15 minutes looking for the worksheet that's due tomorrow, yet it's nowhere to be found. You start **concocting** excuses: Your sister spilled milk on it, a friend stole it as a prank, the dog ate it... but let's get real. The only one responsible for the lost assignment is you.

We get it—when your schedule is **hectic**, like it is at the start of the school year, it's difficult to stay on top of your responsibilities. Homework goes missing, or you forget to do it altogether. Before you know it, you're dealing with grumpy teachers, grumpier parents, and a mess the size of Texas. Of course you want to get organized, but how?

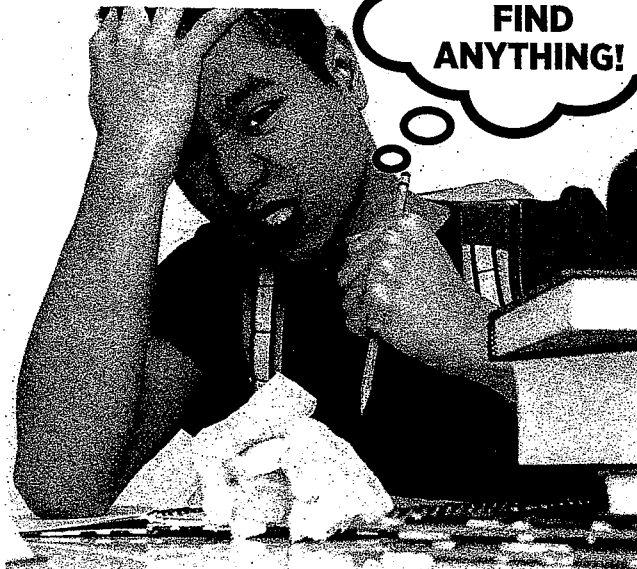
Thankfully, this is not mission impossible. Experts say organization is a **learned** skill, not a talent. Read on for easy organizational fixes that will help you get through your messiest moments.



YIKES! You're ready to rock your geometry test—but your calculator is MIA

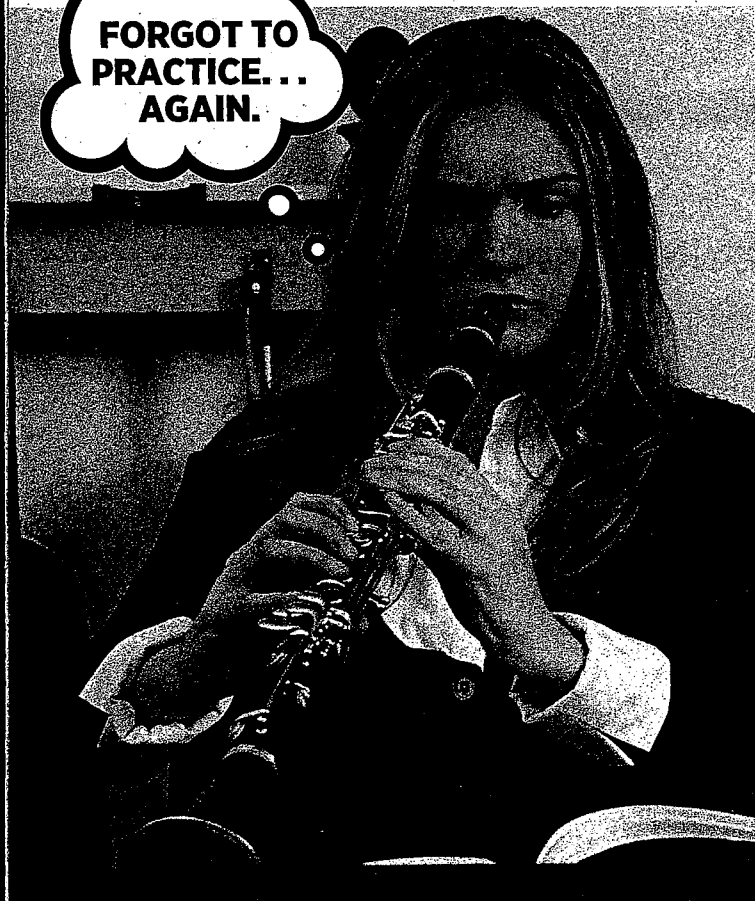
THE FIX: Give all your gear a home

If you need to find the milk, you look in the fridge. And when you're done pouring a glass, you put the carton back in the refrigerator, not the pantry—right? To keep track of school supplies, treat them like the milk and give everything one—and only one—home. Your calculator, for example, can live in the pencil case that stays inside your math binder. This means that when you're done using it, you return the calculator to the case, not to the desk drawer, bedroom floor, or dark depths of your backpack. Before you wrap up your homework for the evening, take a minute to make sure all your supplies have returned "home."



Psst, this trick could have prevented the Case of the Missing Worksheet too. Go home tonight and designate one folder to house all your homework. Finished with a worksheet? Slot it back in!

FORGOT TO PRACTICE... AGAIN.



YIKES! You get to band class and realize that you totally forgot to practice your new part

THE FIX: Follow the write-and-review routine

Jotting down homework on a scrap piece of paper or, even worse, relying on your memory to remember to get the work done won't cut it. You need a planner or notebook—let's call it Homework Central—that you use for all your assignments. Keep it on your desk (or music stand) during class. The moment you hear your teacher assign homework, mention an upcoming test you need to study for, or remind the class that permission slips are due tomorrow, jot it down. Peek at Homework Central after the final bell rings to make sure you're bringing home everything you need for that night's work. Then pull it out again as soon as you get home. **Obsessive?** Nope. This helps keep your to-dos top of mind and easy to check, so that you don't blank on anything that you have to get done.



SO.
DONE.

An A+ Study Space

We found your homework—and cleaned up the rest of the mess. Here's how we did it.

YIKES! It's 10 p.m. and you haven't started studying
THE FIX: Blast past procrastination

Humans procrastinate because the brain prefers immediate rewards (scrolling through Instagram) over long-term satisfaction (getting your studying done early so you can relax). But the reality is that you'll regret your choice. The next time you're tempted to delay an assignment, picture post-procrastination you (**Frazzled! Exhausted!**). Not the look you're going for. Then take a deep breath and begin with the smallest, easiest first step, such as writing a single word and definition on a flash card. Starting is often the most difficult part of a task. Once you get over that hump, you'll likely find you have the discipline to keep going.

Use this same method with long-term assignments. The very day a project is assigned, add it to Homework Central and get started, even if that's simply by rereading the assignment sheet.

Store worksheets and other homework assignments in one folder so that they never go missing again.

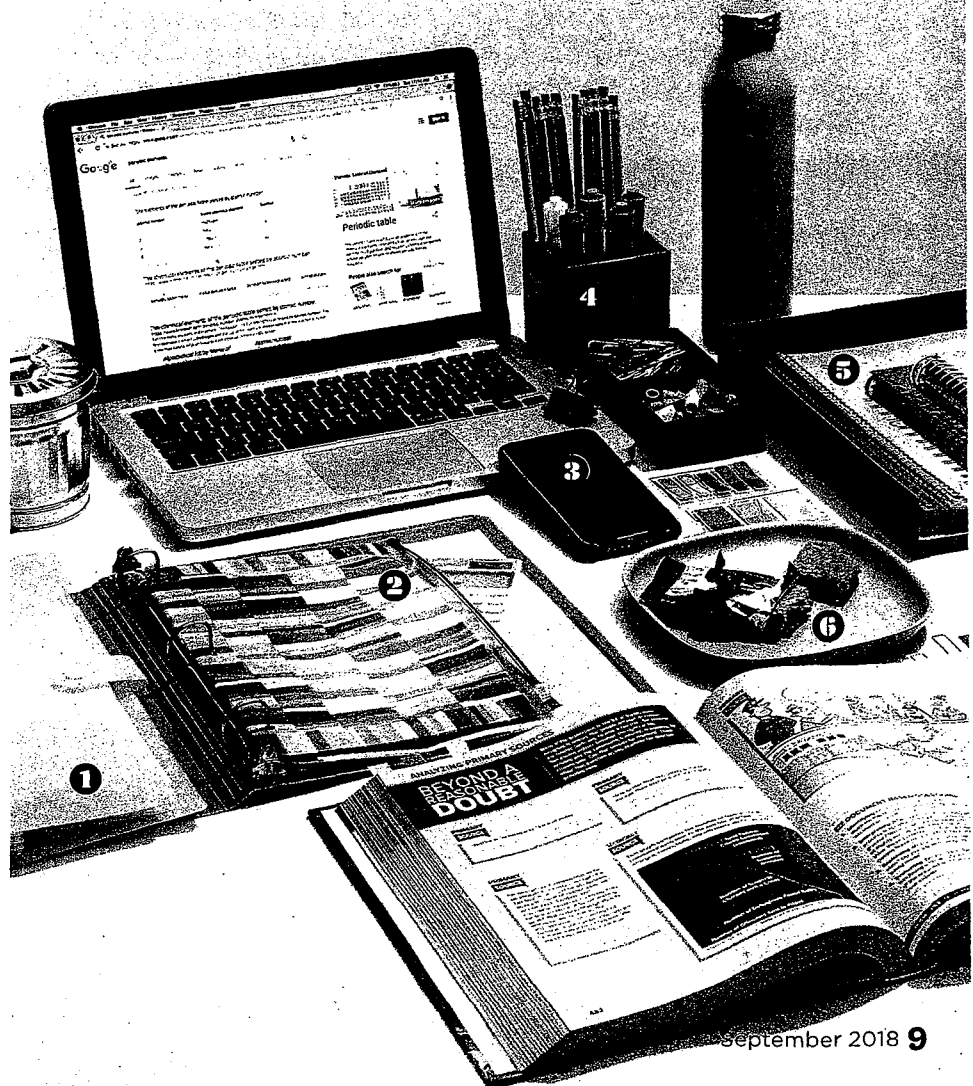
Corral gear that travels between school and home in a DIY pencil case. (See how-to instructions on p. 11.)

Turn your phone off (or switch it to airplane mode) to prevent text messages and notifications from interrupting your work.

Stash pencils, highlighters, and other supplies in containers to keep your workspace mess-free. Less clutter = fewer distractions.

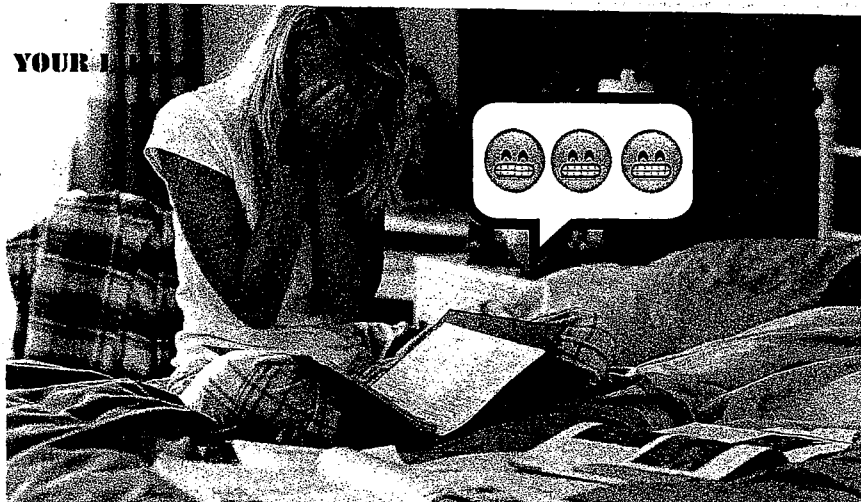
Track assignments and appointments in a planner so that you don't have to rely on easy-to-lose sticky notes.

Use a plate! Yes, we sound like your parents—but c'mon. Crumbs on your English paper won't score you any bonus points.



ISTOCKPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES (FRUSTRATED BOY); IMAGE SOURCE/GETTY IMAGES (CLAIRNET)

STEVE HUGGLAND/GETTY IMAGES (STUDYING); LEVI BROWN (CLEAN DESK)



YIKES! You have so much work that you don't know where to start

THE FIX: Be a work-style sleuth

Most people fall into one of two categories. Those on Team Easy First (EF) work best when they start with the simplest assignment. For them, crossing it off the list provides a sense of relief and momentum to move to the next task. People on Team Easy Last (EL) prefer starting with the most difficult task. That's because the brain is like a muscle: You're stronger on the first bicep curl than the last, and your brain is typically fresher at the start of the night than at the end. To figure out if you're Team EF or Team EL, try each method on a different night and see which works best.

↘ You could also start by studying for the class you're doing best in (if you're Team EF) or class you need help in (if you're Team EL).

YIKES! Your mom booked your haircut for the same time as your soccer tryouts

THE FIX: Adopt the block-it-out method

First things first, go to tryouts. The haircut can wait. But to prevent being double-booked in the future, use a planner, either a paper one or an electronic version such as Google Calendar. Block out all your obligations in a bright color: school, soccer, your coffee shop job, get-togethers with friends—everything. The remaining white spaces represent your free hours. Before you talk with your mom about scheduling a haircut appointment or buy tickets to a concert, check your



The Multitasking Myth

Think you can study while snapchatting? Nope. Both tasks fight to use the same area of the brain, causing your concentration to flutter back and forth. In fact, it takes your brain four times as long to process something when jumping between tasks, meaning that 20 minutes' worth of homework can turn into 80 minutes. No thanks! Here, a two-part plan for quitting the habit.

STEP 1 REMOVE TEMPTATIONS Chances are that your phone is your biggest time suck. Prevent apps, games, and texts from sidetracking you by letting friends on Snapchat know you'll be off-line for the next two hours, putting the phone in airplane mode, or sticking it in another room—whatever it takes. This way, you're left with nothing but the homework in front of you.

ECHO/GETTY IMAGES; (TOP) MIFF WINDY; JAMIE GRILL/GETTY IMAGES; (MIDDLE) SHANE/ISTOCK; (BOTTOM) ROB LEVINE/TETRA IMAGES; RE/GETTY IMAGES



**HELP...
NEED A
CLONE!**

calendar to see if you're already busy during those hours. Yes? Reschedule. No? Great—just remember to add the new event to the calendar. (FYI, this planner is also a great place to keep track of project due dates.)

STEP 2 TAKE BREAKS
Do you miss the downtime moments you had when you multitasked? If so, work in 25-minute chunks and set a timer for a five-minute break between each one. Get up and move around during those pauses, even if it's just pacing your bedroom while you check your phone. Research says the activity helps boost creativity.

Craft a Stay-Tidy Case



WHAT YOU NEED

- A 1-gallon plastic bag with slide closure
- Duct tape
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Ruler
- Marker

➊ Add a fifth piece, folding around to the other side to close the bottom of the bag.

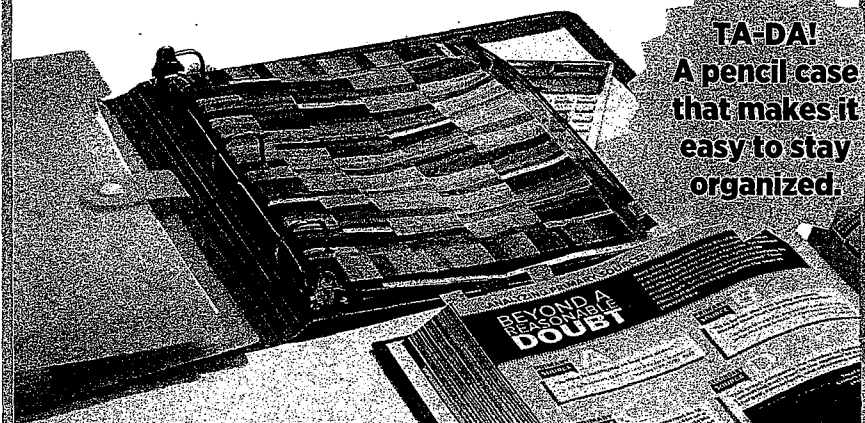
HOW TO MAKE IT

- ➀ Cut off the bottom 3 inches of the bag, using the ruler and marker to measure evenly.
- ➁ Cut nine 10½-inch strips of tape. Starting below the slide closure, stick four strips on the bag lengthwise, overlapping ½ inch on each piece.

➋ Repeat step 2 on the reverse side.

➌ Reinforce the sides with two 7½-inch pieces of tape.

➍ Measuring against your binder, mark where the holes should go and use the hole punch to pop them out.



TA-DA!
A pencil case that makes it easy to stay organized.

THANKS TO OUR EXPERTS: Lesley Martin, academic success coach; Julie Morgenstern, organization and time management expert and co-author of *Organizing From the Inside Out for Teens*