

# GET ORGANIZED!

## CREATING A STUDY SPACE

BY MARY ANNE DUGGAN

**D**oes your child have a space available for the sole purpose of completing nightly homework? If not, you may want to take a tip from the “Kyoiku Mamas” of Japan.

Kyoiku Mamas devote their lives to ensuring their children’s school success. They forego the labor force, fix wonderful lunches and are professional homework helpers. Even if you are not ready to join the ranks of the Kyoiku Mamas, consider borrowing one of their strategies that’s guaranteed to help your child succeed in school: help your child create a homework study space.

Japanese school children have an area set aside at home for the sole purpose of studying. By simply having a certain place for homework, Japanese parents communicate to their children the importance of education. A study space indicates a certain stability about homework—it was here yesterday, it will be here tomorrow, let’s get on with it. The nightly drama of assembling materials for homework is eliminated. If all the tools a child needs for homework are in one place, no time is wasted looking for a sharp pencil or a piece of lined paper. And, as teachers will tell you, creating a special place for home study results in fewer instances of homework being “eaten by the dog.”

As a school teacher who has heard many such tales over the last decade, I often counsel students and their families on homework. When I ask a student who is not completing homework if there is a special study space at home, the answer is invariably “no.” Often, the creation of a home study space will help that same child turn in homework more regularly. What follows are some tips for helping your child set up a special place for homework and studying.

### PERSONALIZE THE STUDY SPACE

It makes sense—your child will feel more motivated if he or she has had a hand in designing the study space. So,

allow your child to take ownership by adding special touches. One child might like to have posters of dogs nearby, another might be wild about sunflowers, still another might want personal artwork to surround the area. Whatever your child can add to make the study space his or her own will make it a more inviting place.

### FIND THE RIGHT SPOT

All studiers are different. Some prefer absolute quiet, others need the din of the television in the background. Music can be a homework enhancer. Where you put the study space is dependent on the type of learner you have on your hands. However, the space should always be away from people-type distractions. Background noise is one thing—having brother Tommy blow raspberries in front of the studier is quite another. The study area should be away from family traffic patterns.

Mesa mom Karen Maryan recently moved 8-year-old Cali’s study space from the kitchen table to a spot with fewer distractions. “The TV distracted her and she always wanted to eat because she was at the table,” Maryan says.

The family dog panting nearby didn’t help either. “A half hour’s worth of homework would take up to two hours,” Maryan says.

Maryan got hold of a lady-secretary desk, which now faces away from the television. “All of her school supplies have a permanent home now,” Maryan says. In a slot meant for envelopes, Cali has placed statues of the Disney characters Meeko and Flit for inspiration.

Wherever you choose to put the study area, its location should remain consistent. Predictability increases the odds that your child will complete homework with regularity.

### TO SIT OR NOT TO SIT?

Should you insist your child sit in a chair at a desk? It depends on the type of assignment being completed. Again, follow

### CATALOG RESOURCES

Back to Basics Toys, (800) 356-5360  
Childcraft, (800) 631-5657  
Domestications, (800) 746-2555  
Hand in Hand, (800) 872-9745  
Hold Everything, (800) 421-2264  
Kids Club, (800) 363-0500  
Lakeshore Learning Materials, (800) 421-5354  
Learn and Play, (800) 247-6106  
Lilly’s Kids and Lillian Vernon, (800) 285-5555  
One Step Ahead, (800) 274-8440  
Sensational Beginnings, (800) 444-2147

### CHILD SAFETY RESOURCES

Arizona Chapter of the National Safety Council, 279-6071 (Phoenix) or e-mail [acnsc@primenet.com](mailto:acnsc@primenet.com)  
Curious Kids Childproofing, 840-6565 (Phoenix)  
U.S. Consumer Products, (800) 638-CPSC

### CHILDREN’S FURNISHINGS

Babies R Us, 705-0400 (Phoenix)  
Bellini Juvenile Designer Furniture, 956-6002 (Phoenix) or 368-0086 (Scottsdale)  
Beyond Conception, 607-0110 (Scottsdale)  
HUDDLE Furniture for Kids, 905-8733 (Scottsdale)  
Toys R Us (locations Valleywide)  
USA Baby, 788-8200 (Phoenix)

### CHILDREN’S INTERIORS

American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), (800) 775-ASID  
Childscapes, 892-1464 (Chandler)  
Spoiled Rotten Children’s Interiors, 951-1777 (Scottsdale)

### CUSTOM ORGANIZATION SYSTEMS

California Closet Co., 267-1311 (Phoenix)  
Classy Closets, 967-2200 (Chandler)  
Closet Masters, 991-4399 (Scottsdale)  
Custom Crafters, 233-9797 (Phoenix)  
Techline, 948-7855 (Scottsdale)

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your learner. For construction projects or reading assignments, your child may prefer to be sprawled out. For assignments that require "neatness first," a desk or table is recommended.

When sitting at a desk or table, your child's feet need to touch the floor. Your child's arm should rest comfortably on the desk or table while writing. Lighting should be adequate. These comfort factors contribute to completing homework.

## GET ESSENTIAL REFERENCE MATERIALS

Some old standbys are a dictionary at your child's level, a thesaurus and an atlas. Also useful is an encyclopedia set or an encyclopedia on CD-ROM, if you have a computer. Best bets—Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia (Compton's New Media, (800) 261-6109) and the Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia (Grolier Electronic Publishing, Inc., (800) 285-4534.)

## STOCK UP ON PAPER PRODUCTS AND SUPPLIES

To avoid procrastination, make sure your child's study space is well stocked with the following items:

- four sharpened pencils
- pencil sharpener
- two erasers
- a set of markers
- scissors
- ruler
- stapler and staples
- tape
- wide-ruled writing paper
- plain white paper
- paper clips
- a folder in which to keep paper fresh

### For older students add:

- note cards
- a tape recorder and blank cassettes
- highlighter pens in various colors
- colored pencils
- graph paper

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## Playful Patterns Organize Your Child's Play Spaces

By Lynn Trimble

Mesa mom Patti Carpenter feels like she spent "her entire pregnancy" planning a nursery for her son. Yet as Austin approached his first birthday, she had given little thought to where he would play once he was up and running. In fact, many parents overlook this issue because they've received so little information about just how important it can be in a child's development.

Early childhood experts agree that children's early surroundings can significantly impact their ability to value self, others and the world around them. According to early childhood educator Josie Young of the Unitarian Early Education Cooperative preschool in Paradise Valley, an age-appropriate play area gives a child "a safe place for exploration where he or she can make choices and feel powerful." A special play space also can bring consistency, a feeling of belonging and a sense of pride to a child.

There are benefits to parents as well. Fewer items get lost, so toys have a longer

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## THERE'S NO BETTER PLACE TO LEARN... THAN IN THE MESA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### It's time to request... Open Enrollment in Mesa Public Schools

Openings are anticipated at most neighborhood schools, Franklin back-to-basic schools, Highland Elementary's arts-integrated program, the MPS Montessori program and at schools that offer full-day kindergarten and K-6 extended-day options.

Please ask for an information packet and an application at any MPS campus.

**Apply by Friday, February 6, 1998.**

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- Extensive athletic and extracurricular programs in music, the arts, industrial technology, ROTC and more • Special education services for students with disabilities •
- Comprehensive technology plan, resulting in one computer for every four students • Transportation available for eligible students



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## A STUDENT'S BEST FRIEND—THE ASSIGNMENT CALENDAR

High achieving students know a secret—they keep track of homework through a central assignment calendar. A common problem, however, is losing the assignment calendar. Purchase a small cork bulletin board to pin up the assignment calendar and any other important papers. A white, dry-erase board also is a good way for your child to write reminder notes about important dates, upcoming events and long-term assignments.

## DOES YOUR CHILD NEED A COMPUTER?

Your child may not actually need a computer but having one might go a long way toward helping your child with school work. As computer use in the schools increases, the computer-literate child has a greater advantage. A study by Odyssey, a computer research firm in San Francisco, indicates that 35 percent of American

households have computers in them. That figure rises to 60 percent for households with annual incomes in excess of \$50,000 and jumps to 70 percent when there are children in the home. Software ranging from typing tutors to basic skills programs to creativity enhancers can be a great adjunct to your child's school day. And computers, like homework, are here to stay.

## THE KYOIKU MAMAS WOULD BE PROUD

By helping your child create a study space, you are truly supporting your child's education. After this, you might want to get to work on another Kyoiku Mama skill—creating the perfect *o-bento*—honorable lunch box!



*Mary Anne Duggan, a Scottsdale kindergarten teacher and the author of Powerful Parent Letters for K-3, is the mother of Taylor, 9, and Seanie 7.*

# RESOURCES

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The Closet Factory, 998-2070 (Scottsdale)  
The Great Organization, 998-1522 (Scottsdale)

## OUTDOOR PLAY SYSTEMS

Dana Playground Equipment, 898-1282 (Mesa) or 788-7757 (Phoenix)  
PJ's Fun Crafters, 233-1441 (Phoenix)  
Play and Leisure, 966-3666 (Tempe)  
Rainbow Play Systems, 955-3987 (Phoenix)

## READY MADE STORAGE SOLUTIONS

Bed Bath & Beyond, 998-2274 (Phoenix) or 890-1414 (Mesa)  
HomeBase (locations Valleywide)  
Home Place (locations Valleywide)  
Linens 'N Things (locations Valleywide)  
Linens Plus (locations Valleywide)  
Payless Cashways (locations Valleywide)  
The Home Depot (locations Valleywide)  
Totally Organized, 277-2865 (Phoenix)


## RECOMMENDED READING

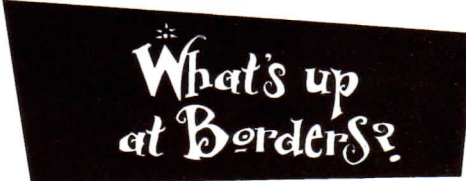
*In My World: Designing Living & Learning Environments for the Young*, by Ro Logripp. This book includes a thorough bibliography of additional books, pamphlets and design professionals.


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<p><b>Columbian Boa Visits from Phoenix Zoo!</b> Saturday • 1/10 • 2:00 pm</p> <p><b>National Kazoo Day Kids Kazoo Band!</b> Saturday • 1/31 • 2:00 pm</p> <p><b>Story Time Fun!</b> Tuesdays &amp; Wednesdays 10:30 am</p>	<p><b>Have a "Beary" Good Afternoon with Corduroy!</b> Saturday • 1/10 • 1:00 pm</p> <p><b>Fischer Price "Little People" Event</b> Saturday • 1/24 • 1:00 pm</p> <p><b>Story Time Fun!</b> Tuesdays • 10:00 am</p>	<p><b>Meet Franklin the Turtle!</b> Saturday • 1/10 • 2:00 pm</p> <p><b>Meet Lyle Lyle Crocodile!</b> Saturday • 1/17 • 2:00 pm</p> <p><b>Pre-school Story Time Fun!</b> Wednesdays • 11:00am</p>