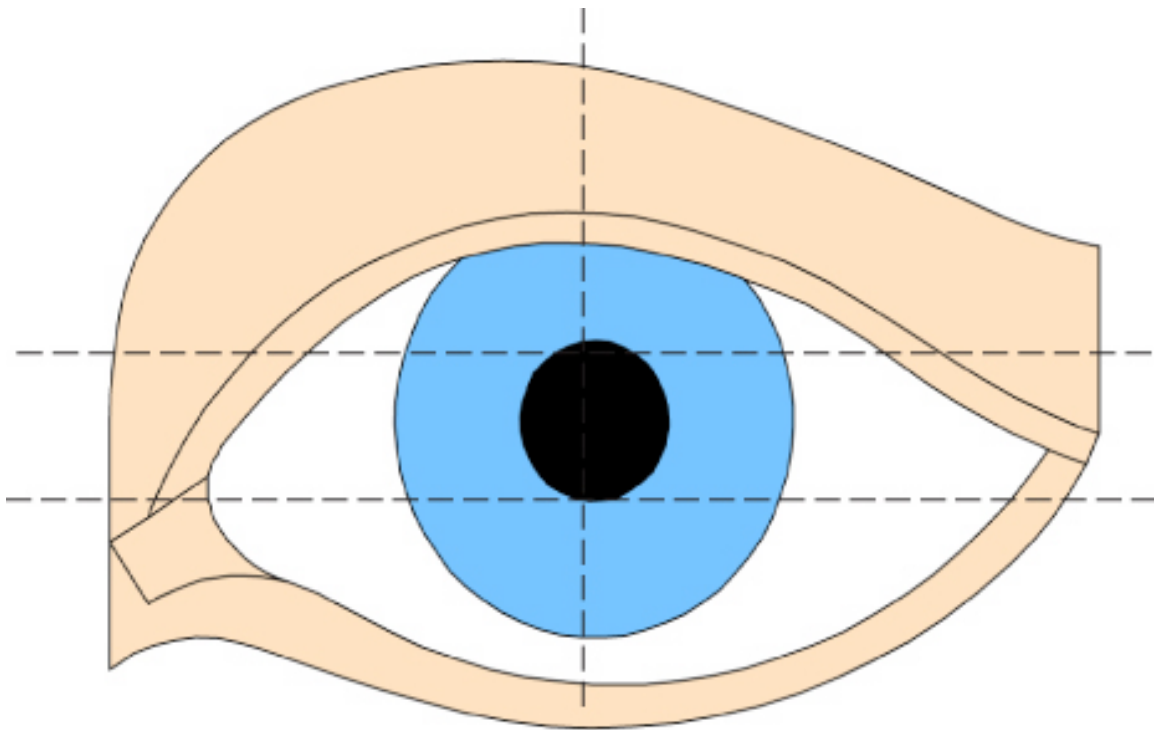


Technology and Organization







Organizational skills plague many students in --- and out – of special education. Students have problems keeping track of assignments and long-term projects; finding and storing papers; keeping their desks, lockers, and backpacks organized; making their work readable and organized; prioritizing the importance of competing tasks; and remembering the sequence of steps in order to complete a task. The problems we have helping our students deal with organizational tasks and strategies lie in the fact that we haven't comprehensively looked at the needs and skill sets associated with organization. When we can categorize the problems, we have a starting point that allows us to more accurately find specific tools that would help remediate and/or compensate for the difficulty.



In addition to identifying the kind of organization problem(s) a student has, I've also found that it is vital to determine how a student learns, remembers, thinks and organizes most easily and naturally. To do this, I first employ a technique that shows the student's primary, inborn learning style preference. This can be done through examination of eye movement through recall questions. Use the eye below to take notes on this process during the presentation:



Once I have determined the inborn or primary learning style preference of the student, I also look for his or her preferences for thought organization. I look for test results or teacher observations which suggest that the student is either much more comfortable with linear (outline and sequences) organization or with multivariate organization (webs and ideas first, then the links).

Based on over 20 years work in AT, I have found the following categories of organizational problems and the have tried the following low to high tech tools. Please note that for each tool suggested, I have used a color coding system corresponding to the learning style and organization style I have found for the student. So my tool choices are determined not only by the organization problem but also by the learning style and thought organization preferences of the student.

-  Visual symbolic (maps, charts, pictures)
-  Visual text (words)
-  Auditory symbolic (music, especially in background)
-  Auditory text (listening to words)
-  Kinesthetic 2 dimensions (writing drawing, etc.)
-  Kinesthetic 3 dimensions (hands on learning or moving while learning)

-  Linear (outlines or sequential steps)
-  Multivariate (webs or ideas first and then the links)

- **Temporal** – Students have problems keeping track of time and estimating correctly the amount of time it will take to complete a task. Students with temporal organizational problems have trouble with keeping track of assignments, estimating the amount of time needed to complete a task, and taking care of long-term, multi-step assignments. They tend to transition poorly between activities, have problems estimating time needed or time left, and may have poor clock reading or elapsed time figuring skills.

- **Tools**

- Time Timer
- Time Pad (Attainment)
- Franklin Flash
- Visual Schedules
- Print Schedules
- Vibrating Pagers
- PDAs with alarm features
- Calendar programs
 - Importance of choosing easy to use and non-cluttered calendar styles
 - Importance of multi view (day / week / month calendars)

- **Spatial** – Students have problems organizing their physical spaces. Students with spatial organizational problems have trouble with organizing their notebooks, keeping their lockers, desks, and backpacks “neat”, and/or organizing their papers. They tend to need more space when working yet even when the tool they need is in sight, they often can’t “find” it.
 - **Tools**
 - Binders and Folders (Intelligear)
 - Use of color coding
 - Color filter use for copying, color papers for writing
 - Reading Helpers or Reading Guides for lining up math columns
 - Transparency files
 - Hefty Tabs
 - Plan books, digital recorders and PDAs
 - Math Grids and Raised Line Papers
 - Filing systems (in notebooks)
 - Filing systems (for lockers)
 - Filing systems (at home or in resource)
 - Magnifier bars or pocket magnifiers for map searches

- **Categorical** – Students have problems knowing how to sort and categorize data with which they have to work. Students with categorical organizational problems seem never to know which folder work goes in, and they can’t identify the different folders they actually need. They are overwhelmed when they have to take a group of “things” and find a method to sort and organize them. Interestingly, some of these students create very “unique” categories when you make them sort a “pile of stuff” into two to three different groupings.
 - **Tools**
 - Using Inspiration to create student designed categories
 - Teaching sorting techniques
 - Using multiple colors of highlighters / highlighter tapes while reading to categorize different kinds of information
 - Color coding of file folders and book covers
 - Teaching computer filing hierarchies (messy desktops)
 - Note-taking with Inspiration templates (headings are topics / subtopics)

- **Attentional** – Students have problems attending to tasks long enough to finish and/or organize them. Students with attentional organizational problems often hear just part of the instructions, get part of the assignment, or have only some of the tools they need in class. They frequently require recueing or repetition of tasks or they find themselves midstream in a task with no idea of where they were heading.
 - **Tools**
 - Using color / lights to increase attention
 - Non-verbal cueing (notes, picture cards, rubrics, etc.)
 - Background “noise” aids for auditory students
 - Hemi-Sync CDs
 - Having the dictionary right at hand (PageMark Dictionary)
 - Talking Calculators or Talking Dictionary Spell Checkers for multi-modal presentations of information

- **Prioritization** – Students have problems knowing what is most important and vital. Students with prioritization organization problems don’t know what they should study for the test, which papers should be kept and which thrown out, and which assignments they should start first. These students often also have categorical organizational problems.
 - **Tools**
 - “Anxiety” categorization
 - Color coding from “hot/red” to “cool/blue”
 - Using orientation as a cue to importance (Page Up or Portabook)
 - Arrow Tabs and Page Markers on pages in the book to denote most important information that must be learned.

- **Sequential** – Students have problems remembering and carrying out the steps in a task or process in the correct order. Students with sequential organization problems tend to skip steps and/or to lose track in the middle of the process and need to start at the beginning. They are often overwhelmed by tasks with too many steps, and they often exhibit memory problems.
 - **Tools**
 - To do lists (paper and PDAs)
 - Rubrics
 - Visual cue reminders
 - Inspiration check lists
 - Step Pad (Attainment)
 - Step by Step Communicator (Ablenet)
 - Talking Photo Album
 - Multi Channel Digital Recorder
 - Use of Templates for Repeated Tasks (e.g. lab reports)
 - Peg Word Schema “cards”