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**SUCCESS!** Learning Center

*presents*

# THE SPOT

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## **The Disorganized Student**

Excerpted from: *Special Kids Problem Solver: Ready-to-Use Interventions for Helping Students with Academic, Behavioral & Physical Problems*

By **Kenneth Shore, Psy.D.** Copyright 1998

More information: [http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_curr/archives/shore.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/archives/shore.shtml)

The biggest challenge many students face is not learning to read or mastering the multiplication tables but rather getting organized. They may have good reasoning ability and well-developed academic skills, but they get failing grades when it comes to the nuts and bolts of learning - bringing the proper materials to class, keeping track of papers, using time wisely, writing down assignments correctly, turning them in on time. Such a seemingly simple task as bringing a pencil to class may elude the disorganized student. The lack of these school survival skills may affect almost every phase of his school performance . . . .

It is not hard to recognize a disorganized student. His desk is usually a sure giveaway. A kind of black hole, it swallows up papers almost as quickly as teachers can distribute them. His backpack may be just as much of a jumbled hodgepodge of school materials. Displaying an almost magical ability, the disorganized student can make papers disappear in the blink of an eye. As a result, he may spend much time in school searching for materials and redoing lost papers. "Everything in its place and a place for everything" are clearly not the words the disorganized student lives by.

While the disorganized student may excel at making objects disappear, he does not juggle very well. He may be overwhelmed by having to keep various times, dates, and assignments

in his head, and even have difficulty remembering his schedule. Forgetfulness is the hallmark of the disorganized student. Upon entering middle school, he may struggle . . . [in] keeping his assignments straight.

The problems of the disorganized student are often most apparent in his homework habits. He may forget to write down the assignment and not remember what to do. Or he may write it down, but record it incorrectly. Or he may write it down accurately, but forget to bring the correct materials home. Or he may complete it, but forget to bring it in to school. Getting the disorganized student to develop good homework habits can exasperate [parents and] teachers.

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### **Success! Learning Center**

*a non-profit educational and tutoring center*  
**Tutoring, test preparation, and homework assistance for students in grades 3-12**

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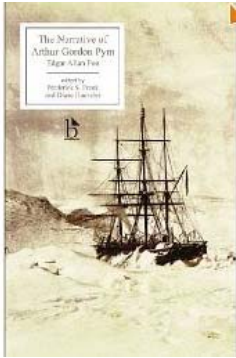
## The Book Nook

Ready for the holiday break? Pick up a good book and **READ!** We've asked our staff to suggest some books they enjoyed reading as youngsters. Here are some great reads for students recommended by Mr. Gaare. Adults will enjoy them, too. Try reading them aloud to the family!



### The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym

by Edgar Allan Poe (1838)

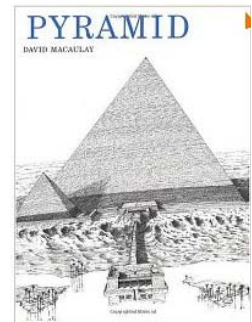


This is Poe's only complete novel. It used to be published under its own cover, but now is typically found only in collections such as **The Complete Stories of Edgar Allan Poe**. Poe (1809-1849) is the classic American writer of horror, mystery, and macabre fiction. This novel relates the adventures of Pym after he stows away on a whaling ship, where he later endures a shipwreck, mutiny, and cannibalism. I read this book when I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. To this day, I remember the book for its raw and gritty treatment of life (and death) at sea. I was completely drawn into the story, and still ask myself, "What would I do in a similar life-or-death situation?" **Arthur Gordon Pym** is great reading for most adolescent boys.

### Pyramid

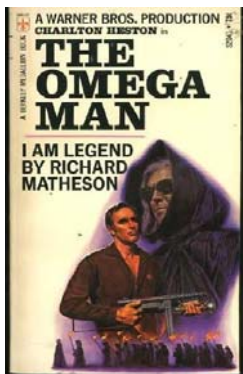
by David Macaulay (80 pages, 1975)

David Macaulay is an amazing author, illustrator, and architect who makes building design and engineering accessible to people of all ages. He is the author of many books, all of which are thoroughly researched and richly illustrated. **Pyramid** is a perfect reference book for any student who is studying the ancient Egyptians. The book describes the building of a large pyramid from start to finish. The author shows what tools were used, who built it and what skills they had, and most importantly, why the pyramid was built the way it was. Illustrated on every page, **Pyramid** is a memorable book that will make ancient Egypt come alive and spark the curiosity of young builders and engineers. Macaulay's other books include **Cathedral, City, Castle, Mill, The Way Things Work**, and another one of my favorites, **Underground**.



### I Am Legend

by Richard Matheson (174 pages, 1954)



Looking for something really scary? I read this book for the first time in high school after watching one of the movie adaptations. I read it alone, late at night, with only a candlelight casting eerie shadows on the walls of my bedroom. Robert Neville, a scientist, is the last man on Earth. World War III has happened, but the world did not burn up in a nuclear holocaust, as everyone imagined. Instead, an airborne virus turns everyone in hideous vampire-zombies. Everyone except for Robert Neville, that is. Who is "normal" now?

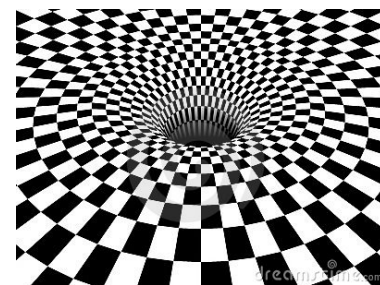
I've read this story twice more since then. Each time it sent chills down my spine. Richard Matheson is the author of many famous horror movies and TV shows. In fact, **I Am Legend** has been turned into a movie three different times: the first time with Vincent Price in the lead role, the second with Charlton Heston, and most recently with Will Smith. The movies are great, but the book is unforgettable. So if you think that you're too old to be scared, curl up with a copy of **I Am Legend** . . . and don't forget the candlelight!

## The Disorganized Student *Continued from Page 1*

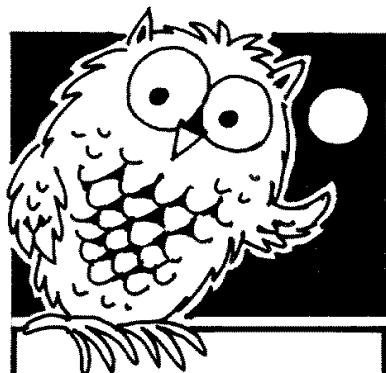
### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISORGANIZED STUDENT

The disorganized student may exhibit the following characteristics . . . .

- ❖ forgets to bring the proper materials
- ❖ is not ready to work when the bell rings
- ❖ is inattentive and distractible
- ❖ is often confused about what to do
- ❖ has trouble remembering information such as his school schedule
- ❖ has a messy desk and backpack
- ❖ loses papers and school materials
- ❖ turns work in late and sometimes not at all
- ❖ uses time inefficiently
- ❖ produces written work that is hard to follow
- ❖ has a problem getting started with a project or report
- ❖ has a poor sense of time
- ❖ writes down assignments inaccurately or does not write them down at all
- ❖ has difficulty expressing himself in an organized, sequential manner
- ❖ is at risk for a learning disability



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## **SLC Tuition**

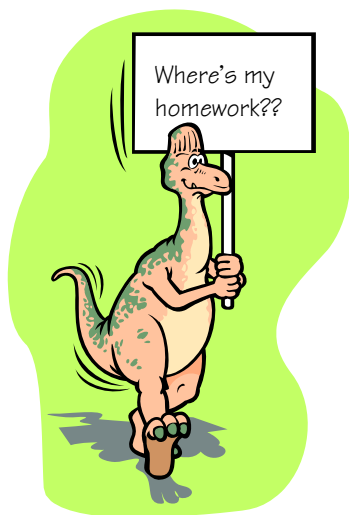
*10% Discount  
Paid in Advance*

This year we are trying something new. Several parents have asked if they can receive a discount for paying the entire semester or year at once, and we're happy to oblige. It's a lot easier on everyone when there is only one payment to deal with. We've warmed up the calculators and figured out the numbers. During December, January, and February, we are offering a 10% discount on fees when the rest of the year (through June 7, 2012) is paid in advance.

Fees are paid every four weeks, generally during the first week of the month. The tuition for a student who attends two days per week (24 hours total tutoring in four weeks) is \$268 per month, three days per week is \$332, and four days is \$396. A discount is available for families.

Some months, such as April, have only three weeks of teaching due to school vacations, and parents thus pay only three weeks of tuition. Check the complete 2011-2012 calendar including holidays and payment schedule online at [www.successlearningcenter.org](http://www.successlearningcenter.org) (click on "2011/2012 After-School Session"), or pick up a copy at the Learning Center.

Success! Learning Center is a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization. Donations are gladly accepted to help underwrite our educational program. Limited scholarships are available for those in financial need. Please see the Director for more information.



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[We've included a few of Dr. Shore's tips for teachers which are also very helpful for parents. Ask Mrs. Haas for a copy of the complete paper if you're interested in more information.]

### Provide Structure and Routine

Disorganized students often have trouble keeping things in order and retaining information.

You can lessen their confusion by providing structure and establishing routine. Spell out the rules of your classroom clearly and simply, and tell your students what materials they must bring to class daily.

Class schedules can be confusing to students, especially if they have a number of teachers or leave class for school programs such as music lessons or speech therapy. Try to schedule activities at the same time every week (for example, give science assignments every Tuesday or spelling tests every Friday).

Have students with complex schedules write them out and tape them on their desks or inside their binders. Make sure they know how to read the schedule.

### State Directions Clearly and Simply

Use a minimum of words to explain what the student must do. Do not give him every detail, or he will miss the key points. Also, avoid giving him multistep directions. Have him repeat your directions to ensure that he understands them. If you are explaining a complex task, demonstrate it to him, and then have him do it while you observe.

### Require Students to Use a Three-Ring Binder

Consider requiring your students as early as third grade to organize their materials and schoolwork in a three-ring binder with subject dividers, blank notebook paper, and a plastic pouch for pens, pencils, and erasers. Suggest

that they get a binder with pockets, one of which can be designated "To bring home" (for assignments to be completed, notes to parents, and papers to bring home and leave there) and the other "To bring to school" (for completed assignments, notes from parents, and signed parent permission slips). Three-hole-punched folders with pockets can also be used for this purpose.

### Have Students Use a Container for Small Items

These items are easily lost in a desk or backpack. In trying to find a pencil, a student may create a disruption in the classroom--and a greater mess in his desk-- as he rummages through his desk. Make sure your students have a case for such items as pencils, pens, erasers, and scissors. This might be a plastic zippered pouch kept in the binder or a box or resealable plastic bag kept in the desk.

### Have Students Keep Their Work in Folders

Many students use the "crumple and cram" method of storing papers. To help them organize their papers so they can get them when they need them, suggest that they keep them in folders in their binders or their desks. They might have a folder for completed work, one for work to be done, and one for parent information--or they might have different color-coded folders for each subject. Three-hole-punched folders that have pockets and fit into binders are useful ways to store papers. Help students figure out what to do with papers they no longer need. You might have them bring folders with completed work home on a specific day of the week. Let parents know when to expect the folders. After the parents review the work, their children can decide whether to store them at home or to discard them.

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### **Encourage the Use of Checklists**

Have the student make a checklist to keep track of school tasks he must complete. Suggest that he keep it in an accessible place, perhaps on his desk or in his binder. Show him how to put the checklist in priority order so that he tackles the most important tasks first. Also, tell him to cross out items on the list once they are completed. You can have a younger student draw pictures rather than use words as reminders.

### **Monitor the Assignment Sheets of Students with Homework Problems, and Have Parents Do the Same**

If a student has a history of not completing homework, require that he come to you at the end of the period or day so you can check the accuracy of his assignment sheet and initial it. Let the parents know that you would like them to review his assignment sheet and initial it

daily when they have checked that the recorded assignments have been completed and placed in his backpack. This process can be discontinued after a few weeks if the student is completing homework regularly.

### **Intervene When There Is a Pattern of Incomplete Assignments**

Talk with the student privately to identify the source of the problem. Is he not copying down the assignments? Is he not bringing home the proper materials? Is he confused by the directions? Does he not understand the work? Does he not have enough time to complete the work because of excessive involvement in outside activities? Is he completing it, but forgetting to bring it in? If necessary, meet with the parents along with the student to work out a specific plan to correct the problem. Follow up to make sure the student is doing what he agreed to do.

### **Organizational Strategies for Parents to Use with Their Children**

- ❖ Encourage your child to put his school materials in the same place every day.
- ❖ Ask your child daily for notes from school, or look in the part of his binder or backpack reserved for parent information.
- ❖ Establish a "homework-comes-first" policy.
- ❖ Set limits on your child's television watching.
- ❖ Tell your child that you expect him to write down all assignments.
- ❖ Have your child do the harder assignments earlier in the evening when he is most alert.
- ❖ Put up a checklist in a prominent place to remind your child of materials to be brought to school daily.
- ❖ Mark on the family calendar tests, projects, and important school activities.
- ❖ Have your child put all school materials inside his backpack before going to bed.

### **Some Miscellaneous Organizational Tips**

The following are some additional strategies for helping your students stay organized:

- ❖ Make sure your students can tell time using a nondigital clock.
- ❖ Use paper of different colors for different tasks so students can locate the papers easily.
- ❖ Have students use self-stick notes to mark the pages they are on.
- ❖ Punch holes in the handouts you give to students so they can easily put them in their binders.
- ❖ Require disorganized students to check with you before they go home, to make sure they have the proper materials and have correctly recorded assignments.



I forgot my books!