

APPS ARE AVAILABLE TO DO MANY THINGS, including helping students to keep track of their homework assignments. Each child or teen is different in how he or she wishes to organize and plan out assignments, however. For many students who would benefit from using an electronic method, the use of a structured app specifically designed for recording homework assignments—such as My-Homework or My Study Life—can be very helpful.

At the same time, I see many children and teens in my practice who balk at the idea of being constrained to organize assignments in a preset way. Some feel that the preset items in electronic planners are not conducive to their individual needs. Others perceive it to be too cumbersome to fill in boxes that appear irrelevant to them.

Students with ADHD in particular sometimes become anxious about being able to follow a preset structure. Using apps that are not solely designed for keeping track of homework assignments, and allow for flexibility in their layout, can thus be very helpful. The caveat to this is that the children and teens need to know how to set up such apps in a way that works for them. Trello and Google Keep are examples of two apps in which students can customize the structure to effectively keep track of homework assignments.





Organize Assignments with Customizable Apps

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Trello (trello.com)

Trello is a project management application that comes in the form of an app (iOS, Android, Windows) or can be accessed via a web browser on a computer.

The following are the key features of Trello:

- All information can be synced across devices (phone, tablet, computer).
- The program offers “boards,” which are essentially individual pages within the program.
- One can share specific boards with others to collaborate or view (parents could be given permission to view a student’s homework board, for example).
- Each board can be fully individualized with multiple boxes for checklists or other types of items on a given page.
- Notifications can be set to remind a child or teen to complete a specific task.
- Add-in for Gmail email accounts allow students to click on emails from Google Classroom and add tasks directly to Trello.

Here are suggestions for getting the most out of the app:

- Students should create an account and download the app onto all devices that they regularly use.
- Decide whether it would be best to have a separate board (page) for each class or to have assignments for all classes on the same board.
- One possible way to organize a homework board would be to have:
 - A set of check boxes for each course for daily assignments.
 - A set of check boxes below daily assignments with upcoming long-term projects.
 - An additional set of check boxes for each course that list out upcoming quizzes and exams.
- Another way to organize the homework board would be to have:
 - A set of daily check boxes for each course for daily assignments.
 - One set of check boxes for upcoming long-term assignments in all courses.
 - One set of check boxes for upcoming quizzes and exams in all courses.
- Using the subtask feature to break long-term assignments and studying into parts would be helpful.
- Children and teens may also want to create a section on the board or a separate board to make a daily or weekly plan of what assignments they will complete.

Google Keep (keep.google.com)

This program is actually built into students’ school email accounts if their accounts are Google Education ones (essentially a Gmail email account with the school or county as the domain instead of Gmail). Thus, with the click of one button, this app opens up in the same window as the

email account. Google Keep can also be accessed directly from Google Docs, which is helpful for younger students who use this program, but not an email account.

Google Keep is a notetaking app that allows students to create lists, set up reminders, and save items to the app for easy reference later.

- Key features include the following:
 - Students can use the list feature to keep track of tasks.
 - Lists and reminders can be color coded.
 - Reminders syncs with Google Calendar so any tasks set as a reminder will show up in Google Calendar on one’s phone or computer.

To get the most out of the app, the following suggestions will help. This app can be used in several different ways:

- Reminders/Lists of Tasks
 - Use Notes/Reminders as a master list of all homework tasks that need to be completed.
 - Consider color coding reminders and lists of tasks. A different color could be used for daily and long-term assignments.
 - Using the label feature to categorize items can be useful. One could have a label for each class.
 - Make sure to connect Reminders to Google Calendar so that these can be viewed in the same place as calendar events (which helps with planning).
- Daily To-do list
 - Create a separate note/list daily and put tasks on that list that will be completed that day. The benefit of doing it in the same app as the master list is that it is easy to see everything and plan out completion of items.
 - Students can create daily to-do lists several days or more in advance, which helps limit the amount of time needed each day for planning. For example, if today is Tuesday and a student has an exam on Friday, he or she could list out studying for that exam now on their list for Wednesday and Thursday tasks.

Trello and Google Keep are two examples of the many apps and programs available that provide students with the ability to customize the program to meet their individual needs. For individuals with ADHD, structure is very important. While many students do better with a program that is already structured, others do best when they put in their own structure. The suggestions provided here for ways to use these apps may be applicable to other task management programs that offer flexibility in layout. **A**

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