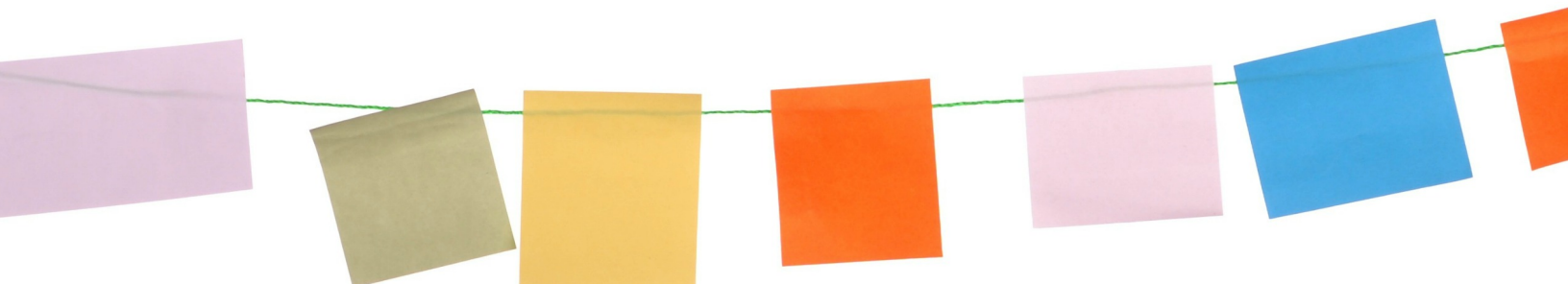


Daily Duties

A decorative string of colorful paper scraps in shades of purple, olive green, yellow, orange, pink, and blue, hanging across the top of the page.

independent check sheets

A decorative string of colorful paper scraps in shades of yellow, orange, pink, blue, and red, hanging across the middle of the page.

for students

A decorative string of colorful paper scraps in shades of olive green, orange, blue, red, pink, and yellow, hanging across the bottom of the page.

by Donna Reish

Opening

One of the problems that we hear about over and over again when we are out speaking is that of students not completing everything that you want them to in any given day. AND keeping kids on task.

Our solution: Independent Work Lists!

Independent work lists, or Daily Duties as I affectionately call them, can literally change the way your school day goes.

The “did you do your math yet?” and the “why aren’t you practicing piano right now?” days can be behind you if you implement and follow through with Independent Work Lists for your children (and for you...see [The Simplified Planner](#)).

I discovered Independent Work Lists over twenty-five years ago when I had three young students who seemed to need me all the time—along with a preschooler and a baby! Something had to give.

I had already had success with morning routine charts and chore charts. Why couldn’t we apply the same concept to the kids’ daily school work? A checklist that kept kids on task when I was tied up elsewhere? Yes!

I just can’t stress enough the benefits of the Independent Work Lists—for Mom and for the student. It takes away gray areas of parenting (something crucial that we teach in our parenting seminars). It helps the child become an independent learner. It teaches many character qualities—perseverance, prioritizing, resourcefulness, responsibility, diligence, timeliness, and much more.

Yeah, I am pretty crazy about my twenty-five years of Independent Work Lists!

General Tips

There are a lot of decisions to make in developing your children's morning routine lists. Will it have EVERYTHING on it or will it only have the child's independent work on it? Will it have chores, music practice, etc., or will it just have "school"?

What type of list will you use—a chart with pictures; a pocket approach (like for younger children with chores); a chart on the wall; a printed sheet on a clipboard; a lesson planner (like teachers use)? Does it matter for different ages?

In this e-book/download, I hope to answer some of these questions as well as give you sample charts that you can print off and use with your students. But first let me answer some of those questions based on the ages of your kids.

Here are some general tips and guidelines that I used for my kids' Independent Work Lists (followed by a list of suggestions for Elementary kids and a list of suggestions for older kids).

- (1) Explain to your child that this is his daily accountability list. He is to get these things done each day. (Hint: We taught our children from their earliest recollection of school that school is their occupation. It was what they were supposed to be about every day. No questions asked. No exceptions (unless we parents wanted an exception for sickness or family trips, etc.—in other words, the child doesn't choose to do school or not do school—ever).
- (2) This is kind of another subject, but it fits here as well: A child should not go to basketball practice, Girl Scouts, youth group, or any other activity if he doesn't do his school. Period. We have so many parents come up to us at conventions and say, "I just can't get my fifteen year old to finish his school each day, and he keeps getting further and further behind." Then we ask, "Does he go to sports practice in the afternoon? Does he go to youth group that night?" etc. etc. None of those things should ever happen if he doesn't do his school. School is non-optional.
- (3) Do your part to be sure that charts are updated, printed, and ready. I know from personal experience that if we are lax in this—they become lax real quick!
- (4) Enlist your husband's help to enforce the lists when necessary.
- (5) Be sure that what you put on the list is truly independent (and this can change from month to month as skills are increased).
- (6) Use whatever method works for your family. Some people like the list for each block of time. Some like the list for each subject area. Some people like to have kids report in every once in a while; others do fine reporting in before "signing off" for the day.

- (7) Speaking of signing off for the day from school, be sure that everything is done before this happens. (Do not let the child determine he's signing off without getting signed off by you.)

Elementary Children

Here are some tips for creating Independent Work Lists for elementary children:

1. Either make it on a chart that the child uses wipe and write markers and mount it somewhere—or make it in Excel (or your favorite record keeping program) and place it on a thin clip boards.

Trust me: loose papers never make it back to mom at the end of the day. (Spoken from true experiences—plural—you would think I would have learned this the first time or two!)

2. Put things in the order of importance on the chart—in the order that you want them done.
3. **And/or** put things in sections.

I used to have mine in order and sections—the first so many items needed done before the child met with Mom or before the child had a morning snack or before lunch chores, or whatever. Never underestimate the value of teaching children time management, prioritizing, etc. via these daily checklists.

4. For things that you are uncertain of/change-ables, put time or generic wording, such as “30 minutes of uninterrupted CQLA work” or “All Meaningful Composition assignments from previous meeting with Mom,” etc.
5. Be sure to include drill work, silent reading, etc.—all the extras that you want him to do each day.

(I even put the things that they would often do as I read aloud on this list in the section marked “During Read-Aloud”—such as coloring in educational coloring book, penmanship page, building something with Legos, etc.)

7. Be sure there is a time in which it is turned in each day.

If your child’s independent list is on a clip board, he can simply put the clip board on your desk at the end of the day—all checked off and ready for the next day.

8. The Independent Work Checklist is, in part, to help keep the child moving as you are working with other kids, walking your college kids through a difficulty on the phone, or helping Grandma with something. In other words, you want to teach your student to get up and start on the list right away—and to go back to the list any time he is not meeting with you or doing chores, etc. (I even put things like “Read to Jonathan for 15 minutes” and “30 minutes of morning devotional book and journaling” on the list—everything the child does (outside of chores) was listed on this chart.

Junior High and High School

Now on to Junior High and High School. The concept behind the Independent Work List is that it helps a student become, well, independent. In that way, the chart/list/planner should grow with the child—more independence/less neediness. More responsibility/less spoon feeding from Mom.

These will be in no true order—just some things that I want to re-emphasize from the younger ages as well as things that pertain only to olders.

1. Consider the document or chart that works best for your age child now. Most kids in junior high and high school no longer want cutsie charts. Once you decide you want a genuine paper document, then you have to decide how you want it filled in:
 - a. . As he goes, he lists what he does each day, sort of a daily school journal.
 - b. You write in a planner each week for him for the following week (page number, number of pages, lesson number, etc.).
 - c. You have a standard daily Independent Work List that you create in your scheduling program or Excel—that you can customize when something changes, etc. You print this off, put it on a clip board, and have him highlight or mark off as he does things each day.

2. Consider if you are going to make his Independent Work List for him completely or if you will have his input. We liked to choose our high schoolers' materials, schedules, lists, etc., with them, so that they have some input in the process—and to help model for them/teach them how to organize, prioritize, etc.

3. Still use some of the elements from the earlier suggestions (for younger kids) that are universal, such as:
 - a. School is your child's occupation. It is what he should be about during the day.
 - b. Put the daily tasks in sections according to time of day or importance—and also in order according to when they should be done.
 - c. Have a system that works for you every day. Have his list on a clip board that he carries with him/keeps in his school area. Have him highlight as he does things. Have him leave it on your desk when he is done, etc.
 - d. Develop a “no exceptions” approach to daily independent work. A student doesn't go to basketball, girls group, youth group, etc., until his daily independent work list is done.
4. Have blanks on the chart to add in any work from outside classes, music lessons, Bible quizzing, etc.
5. Put things that are not dailies where ever they go. This was always a little bit difficult for me.
 - a. Do twice weeklies go on Tuesday and Thursday (but Thursday is our lesson and errand day...).
 - b. Do three times weeklies always go M-W-F, even though Wednesday is our “cottage class day” and extras do not get done on that day.
 - c. This might take a while to get in the groove, but it is worth it to tweak things and make it work.
6. For junior high kids, consider that you might need smaller chunks (maybe two math sessions at 30 minutes a day, etc.). Again, you know your student and your family situation, so do whatever works best for you.

7. Consider if you want this Independent Work List to be his total chart/list for all aspects of his day at older ages:

- a. Do you want to put his devotions, music practice, and outside work on there too?
- b. Do you want it to contain meetings/tutoring sessions with you?
- c. Do you want it to also be his chore list?

- 8. There are some definite advantages to a junior high or high schooler having his day right in front of him in one spread sheet. However, this can also get overwhelming to some kids.
- 9. If you are using a “time” planner in which the time slots for each subject are written in, you might want to include times in which he meets with you, does chores, does lab with a sister, etc., so that he can see the big picture for how time fits together.
- 10. Consider switching to a start time/finish time approach and having him total up his time spent on school if he is having a lot of trouble with time management. Seeing how much time actually got spent on important things and how much time got wasted can be invaluable in teaching older kids independence.

Closing

I hope that these charts will be a help to you. If you have questions about how to use any of them specifically, contact me, and I can give you some direction. I can't tell you how worth it, it is to implement independent lists!

Subject	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

Thursday	Friday	For week _____ to _____

Independent Work –Timing Tasks

Time Block or Subject		
Tasks	Start/Finish	Total Time
	Total time:	

Time Block or Subject		
Tasks	Start/Finish	Total Time
	Total time:	

Time Block or Subject		
Tasks	Start/Finish	Total Time
	Total time:	

Time Block or Subject		
Tasks	Start/Finish	Total Time
	Total time:	

Time Block or Subject		
Tasks	Start/Finish	Total Time
	Total time:	

Time Block or Subject		
Tasks	Start/Finish	Total Time
	Total time:	

Month.....

MONDAY

8	1
9	2
10	3
11	4
12	5

TUESDAY

8	1
9	2
10	3
11	4
12	5

WEDNESDAY

8	1
9	2
10	3
11	4
12	5

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Mowgli

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Peter Pan

Language Arts Lady

Write-for-a-Month - Writing From Given Source

Grades 4th, 5th & 6th

Beauty and the Beast

Language Arts Lady

Write-for-a-Month - Writing From Given Source

Grades 6th, 7th & 8th

Mowgli

Language Arts Lady

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Donna Reish, mother of seven grown children and thirty-two year homeschool veteran, is a prolific curriculum writer, blogger, and teacher from Indiana. She graduated from Ball State University with a degree in Elementary Education and did master's work in Reading Specialist following that. Donna began writing curriculum for a publisher out of Chicago specifically for homeschoolers twenty years ago. Following the completion of those thirty books

over ten years, she and her husband started a small press publishing company writing materials for homeschools and Christian schools. With the surge of digital products, Donna now writes curriculum books that are digital downloads (both secular and faith-based products), bringing her total curriculum products to 120 books of 50,000+ pages. Donna tests all of her books with 50-80 in-person students each year locally before they are published--and this is her real love: Seeing the faces of students who achieve language arts goals that they never thought were possible using her creative, incremental approaches and materials. Donna teaches parents, teachers, and teacher parents, about grammar, language arts, writing, reading, learning, and more at her teaching website, *Language Arts Lady Blog*, and through her videocasts/podcasts, *How I Teach*.

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