

Session 7:

Organization

Parent Summary: Topic

Session Overview

- ◆ Homework review
- ◆ Organization
- ◆ Homework assignment

Key Information

- ◆ Organization involves arranging information or materials in a meaningful way, in order to create structure and increase efficiency.
- ◆ Organization can involve the physical environment, as well as information, ideas, thoughts, etc.
- ◆ Children who struggle with organization may
 - ◆ Not know where to put things.
 - ◆ Misplace or lose things frequently.
 - ◆ Not be able to find things when they need them.
 - ◆ Be easily overwhelmed by tasks that require organizational skills. This can contribute to your child being quickly overwhelmed at the start of a task, because many tasks require organization to get started (e.g., organization of information, steps, etc. is an important aspect of planning). It can also contribute to your child quickly running out of drive, because ongoing organizational demands of some tasks use up all of their mental energy (e.g., organizing information while writing, organizing materials while tidying, etc.).
 - ◆ Struggle to group materials or information in a logical way.
 - ◆ Struggle to organize and make sense of their own thoughts.
 - ◆ Have difficulty organizing ideas in writing.
 - ◆ Find it difficult to speak in a way that makes sense to other people. For instance, they may have difficulty organizing the information they want to share with others in a way that will make sense to the listener.
 - ◆ Be incorrectly viewed as irresponsible, scattered, confusing, willfully messy, or negligent.
- ◆ Parents can help support children with organization by providing lots of organizational materials and tools, as well as scaffolding organization skills in each area (i.e., organization of physical environment, information, thoughts/ideas, etc.).
- ◆ One of the most important things to do is to try different storage solutions. If one system doesn't work for your child, work together to figure out why. Consider what got in the way of using the system as planned, and what they did and didn't they like about the system they tried. Use that information to choose what to try next or figure out how to tweak the system so that it works better.
- ◆ Some kids do better when they have highly specific storage, so they know exactly where to put things and how to find them when they need them. Other kids prefer to be able to have storage for a wider variety of things (e.g., a bin of all types of building toys).
- ◆ Children who struggle with organization often need a system that requires minimizes the amount of thought or effort required of them in the moment.
- ◆ For children who struggle to take care of their clothing, some strategies could include:
 - ◆ Having them put their clothes into one of two bins, baskets, or drawers – one for clean and one for dirty. They may also need an adult to help them attend to this task each evening until it becomes a part of their daily routine.
 - ◆ Having them put dirty clothes in a hamper, and clothes that are still clean on a specific chair or set of hooks for another day.

- ✦ Teaching them simple folding techniques. Start small – have them help fold a few specific items, and as they get better at it, let them do more. Consider the Marie Kondo folding method, the half-fold and roll method. If all else fails, consider having them hang clothes.
- ◇ Some children who struggle to keep their room and/or play areas clean may benefit from having a core set of essentials in their personal space, with extras that may be needed on occasion stored elsewhere. For example, consider having them keep their favorite clothing in drawers and extra clothing items in a bin under their bed. Consider rotating games and toys in and out of their play space. This both limits the number of objects to keep organized, but may also help keep them from growing bored of these items.
- ◇ Provide jars or clear decorative containers for small, annoying toys and knick knacks.
- ◇ Keep essential school supplies in one place, and extra storage and organizational materials for school in a separate space (e.g., your child probably won't need a protractor kit all year long, so it can be kept separately until it is needed). Try to keep a variety of organizational materials on hand as you work to develop systems that work for keeping your child's schoolwork and materials organized. Since the materials they need will also change as they get older, it doesn't hurt to plan ahead.
- ◇ For smaller stationary and supplies consider a set of adjustable drawer organizers. There are some great ones designed for bathrooms (e.g., makeup organizers) that work well for pens, highlighters, sticky notes, etc.
- ◇ Consider under-bed or storage closets for storing bulky school supplies, such as binders, reams of paper, and so forth. Magazine racks and pot lid sorters can be helpful for organizing different types of paper, notebooks, etc.
- ◇ Many children with ADHD have strong emotional attachments to dolls and stuffed animals and may maintain these attachments for longer than many other children. Be creative when trying to find ways to contain these items. For example, high shelves that can't be used for items your child needs to be able to use frequently can be used for cuddlies they don't need to sleep with or play with everyday (consider rotating cuddlies in and out if they struggle with this). Hanging nest bags or toy hammocks from the ceiling is another option. Some children may be willing to store cuddlies in bean bag, allowing them to double as seating.
- ◇ Check your local dollar stores for organizational materials for schoolwork, while you're trying to figure out what works for your child.
 - ✦ If your child uses binders the following tools might be helpful:
 - ◇ Binder dividers that have storage pockets if your child struggles to get their work or handouts into their binder consistently.
 - ◇ Consider 3-hole duo tang folders to help your child keep track of homework that needs to be completed and/or handed in each day. Pages related to current homework (and forms) that need to be completed can be kept on one side and completed homework (and signed forms) that needs to be handed in can be kept on the other side.
 - ✦ A clear, plastic, top loading folder can be kept in a child's backpack for last-minute handouts or notices that they can't get into their binder, so they don't get crushed, torn, or lost in their bag. Some children may prefer to cut the top flap right off so there's nothing in their way when they rush to put something in it.
 - ✦ Consider multi-tab plastic folders for children who really hate binders. While they are working on a unit, they can keep a stack of fresh, 3-hole paper in each subject section. Then, each time they write notes for a particular subject, they add them to the end or bottom of the pile, and just slide the whole stack of paper back into that section at the end of each class. Once the unit is done, your child will need to remove their notes for the completed unit to make space for new notes. Older children who need to write longer multi-unit tests or exams will need to store old notes in a larger binder that can be kept at home. The storage binder will need to be labelled for each course, and have dividers for each unit, so that your child can easily find the notes they need, later.

- ◆ Adequate scaffolding and establishing strong routines are critical. If your child is constantly disorganized, it's a sign they need more support. Work with them to figure out what is getting in their way and how to address those obstacles.
- ◆ Teach your child strategies to help them organize information. For example:
 - ✦ Color-coding can help chunk and organize information and make critical information stand out in their notes or on a calendar. Keep a supply of pens and highlighters in appealing colours.
 - ✦ Use physical/visual-spatial organization to create structure (see Appendix A for templates).
 - ◆ Graph paper for math problem-solving.
 - ◆ Mind-mapping to organize ideas and information.
 - ◆ Visual writing organization templates (e.g., hamburger essay).
 - ✦ Teach your child strategies for taking notes in class or from textbooks (e.g., see Appendix A for the Cornell system).
 - ✦ Teach your child to have ongoing headers on each page of notes, just in case their notes ever become mixed up. Each individual page (front and/or back) should have a page number, as well as a title or date to which the page belongs (e.g., Mar 1, p.3).
- ◆ Help your child learn to organize tasks. This is where planning and organization really come together. It's not just about knowing what you need to do – it is also about organizing themselves so they can get a task done.
- ◆ Keep an eye out for other executive functions that might contribute to their difficulties with organization (e.g., attention, memory, working memory, drive/motivation, etc.).
- ◆ Consider recruiting support from other friends or family members if your organization challenges interfere with your ability to help your child develop strategies in this area.

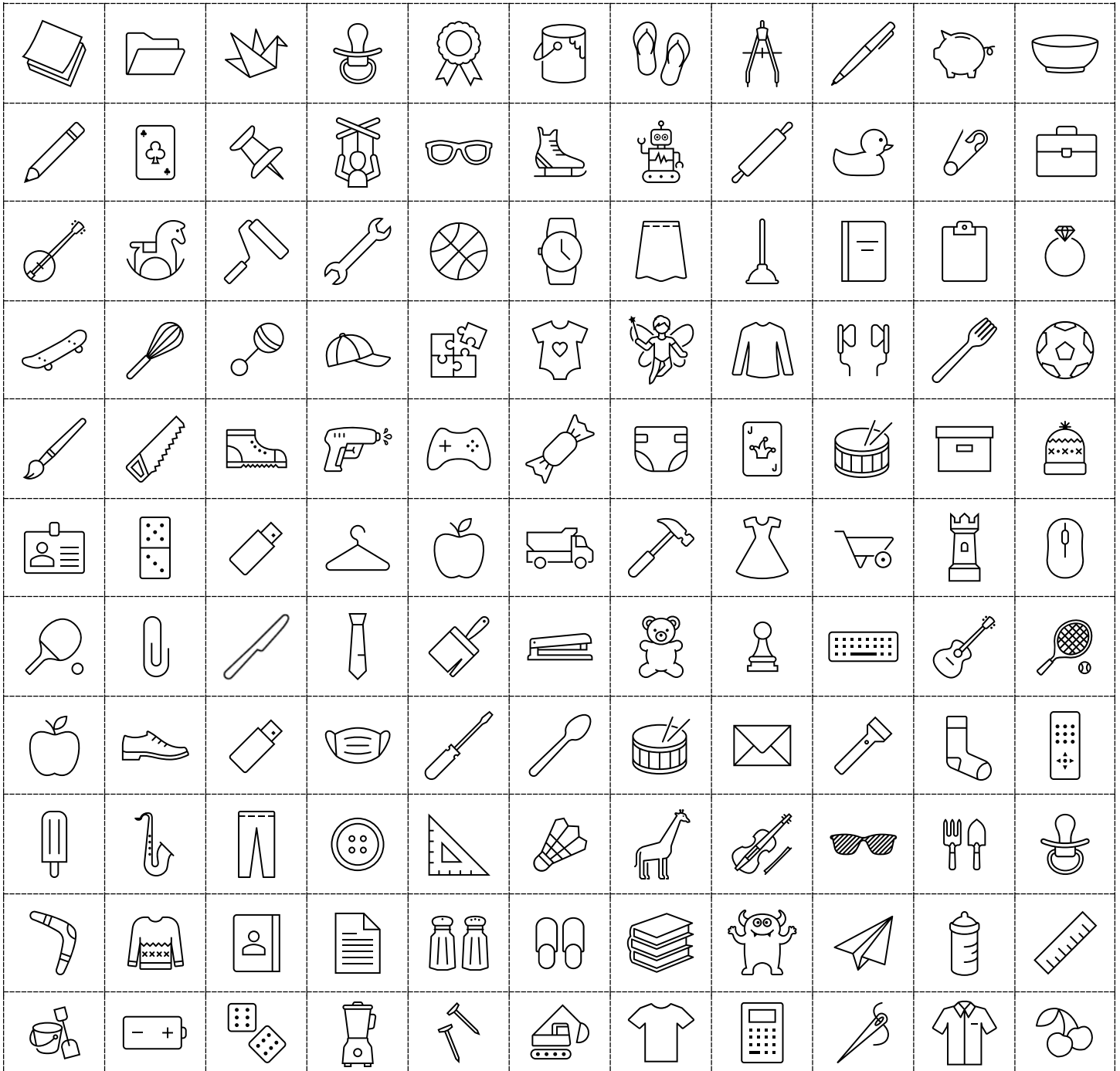
Homework Checklist

- Organization worksheet. Try 1-2 strategies with your child this week.
- Organization Reflection worksheet.

Handout: Activities

Activity 1

Cut then organize the items below into 4-5 categories. Write down your five categories.



Worksheet: Organization

Check off any strategies or tools you know are helpful to your child and mark any you would like to try. Choose 1-2 to try this week.

Provide Organizational Materials/Tools

- Try different storage solutions.
 - Shelving with opaque bins with clear labels or photos indicating what is inside.
 - Shelving with clear bins and/or opaque doors or other way of hiding when not in use.
 - Label drawers, cabinets, etc.
 - Large, unsorted bins or smaller, sorted bins.
 - Adjustable containers or shelf/drawer dividers.
 - Alternative clothing storage (e.g., clean & dirty hampers, hooks, bins on shelves, clear drawers).
 - Provide space/storage for “extras” (e.g., extra storage materials, toys, etc.).
- Try different types of organization materials for schoolwork.
 - Large vs. small binders vs. multi-tab folders.
 - Binders to store completed units, with tabs for each unit.
 - Duo tongs for notices and homework (3-hole duo tongs for binders).
 - Individual vs. tabbed notebooks.
 - Colour-coded folders, dividers, and/or notebooks (paired with ink/font colours on calendars).
 - Pocket binders with storage for important items.
 - Open plastic folder for “last minute” papers, handouts, notices, etc.
- _____

Scaffold Organization Skills – Materials and Belongings

- Provide direct support to teach your child how to categorize items.
 - Build on any structure they have already established, even if it makes no sense to you.
 - Work with them to tweak their internal structure when necessary.
- Teach your child to consider how, when, and where items are used and to use that information to adapt organization and storage for efficiency and convenience.
- Use information about what isn't working to inform new strategies.
- Use checklists to build independence over time.
- Post a photo of how a room should look, so they can check their work after tidying.
- Build daily and weekly routines to prevent overload.
- Provide and support repeated practice. Walk them through routines, initially. Then, slowly have them take over parts of the routine independently (with appropriate tools, such as visual aids).
- _____

Scaffold Organization Skills – Written Information

- Teach your child to think about how to categorize and organize information.
- Teach them strategies to keep track of categorized information, such as colour-coding, numbering, and using visual-spatial organization.
- Provide direct support for finding and highlighting important information, key words, etc.
 - Try erasable highlighters for kids who overdo highlighting.
- Support and provide regular practice sorting and organizing notes and handouts.
 - Clearing old notes out of binders/folders between units; storing in a safe place.
 - Dating and numbering pages.
- Teach different methods for notetaking (e.g., Cornell, see Appendix A).
- Teach your child to use graph paper to help organize math equations (see template Appendix A).
- Experiment with different graphic organizers for written work (see examples in Appendix A).
- _____

Scaffold Organization Skills – Oral Information

- Teach your child to think about what they want to say, and why.
- Help them think about who they are speaking to.
 - What do they they already know?
 - What do they want or need to know?
 - What information do they need to know right away (e.g., topic, essential background information)?
 - How much detail do they need or want?
- Help them learn to write down their most important points for important conversations.
- Practice sequencing information (background, beginning, middle, end).
- Teach strategies to help them keep track of information they hear.
 - Take notes when information is important and/or they need to remember it later.
 - Jot down their own ideas to help prevent interrupting.
 - Repeat back what they believe the speaker has said, to check that they haven't missed or misunderstood anything.
 - Ask for clarifying information.
- _____

Scaffolding Organization Skills - Tasks

- Use checklists to help your child organize themselves when they are carrying out a task or plan. There are a number of things that might be helpful to include on these types of checklists, such as:
 - Materials/supplies required (e.g., pens, paper, glue, scissors, calculator, ingredients, etc.).
 - Plans/instructions (e.g., for school tasks they will need the assignment instructions, criteria, etc.).
 - Technology (e.g., helpful Apps, computer, tablet, etc.).
 - Human resources (e.g., who they can turn to for help, who they need to talk to, group members for group projects, etc., as well as contact information, if required).
 - Other resources (e.g., graphic organizers, checklists, formulas).
- Help your child stay organized before and after they complete tasks, too. For instance, use alarms, checklists, and/or adult support to ensure:
 - Your child has everything they need to bring home from school before they leave the school. Some children may need a teacher to make sure things actually make it into their bags.
 - Your child gets other important items such as completed forms and assignments into their school bag the moment they are completed.

Play Games to Practice Organization Skills

- Headbandz, Apples to Apples, Scattergories, Make 'n' Break, 5 Second Rule, Guess Who?
- Online sorting and organization games. For example, Education.com has sorting games that require children to sort all kinds of information, from grammar to geometry.
 - <https://www.education.com/games/sorting/>

Worksheet: Organization Reflection

Which organization strategies did you try this week?

1. _____

2. _____

Describe your experience with these strategies.

1. _____

2. _____

What do you want to try next to support your child's organization skills (e.g., how might you tweak the strategies you have already tried or what other strategies might you wish to try)?

1. _____

2. _____

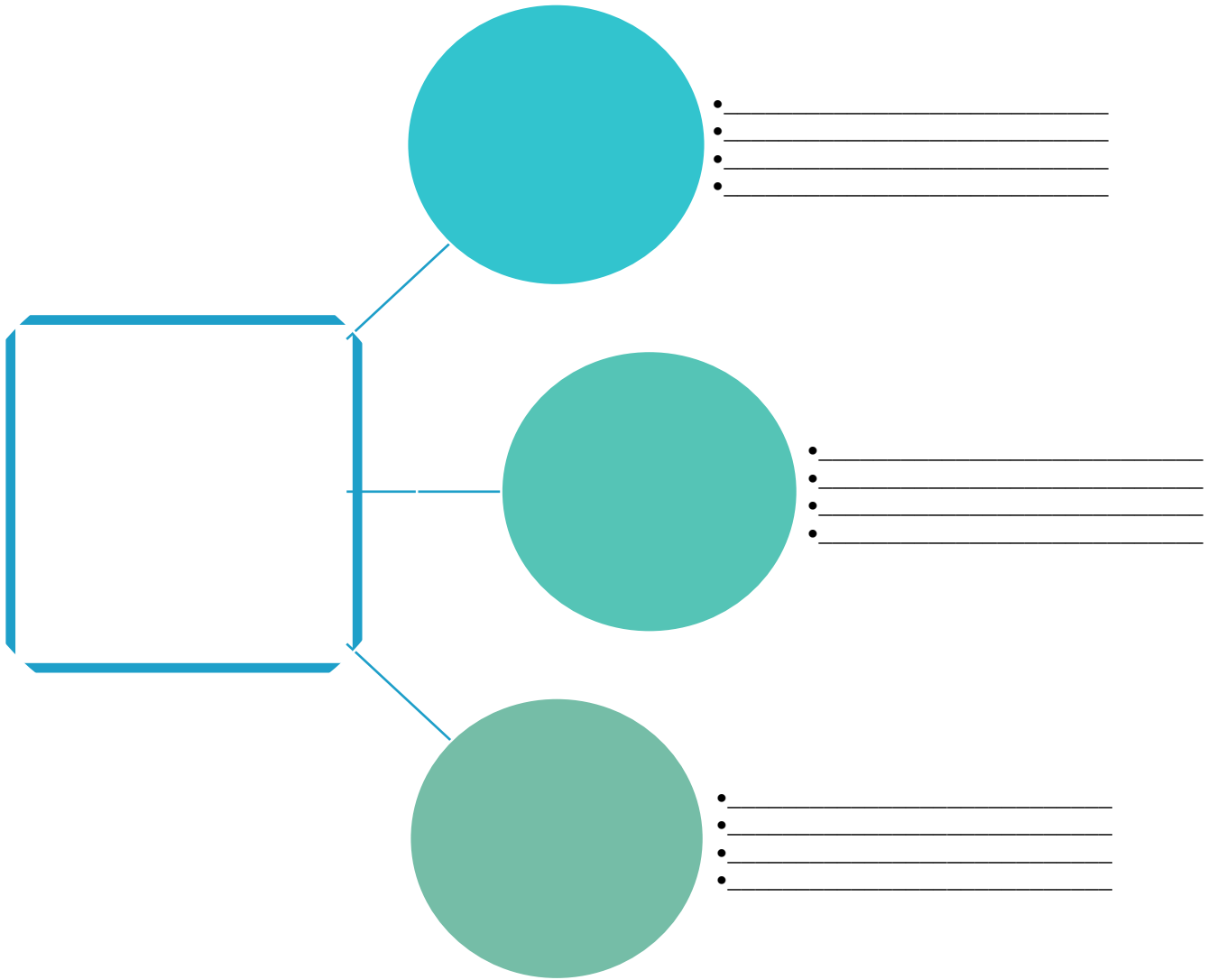
What organizational materials would you need, if any?

1. _____

2. _____

Appendix A: Resources

Mind-Mapping Example and Template



5 Sentence Paragraph Template

Title	
Topic Sentence	
Detail 1	
Detail 2	
Detail 3	
Concluding Sentence	

5 Paragraph Essay Template

Title	
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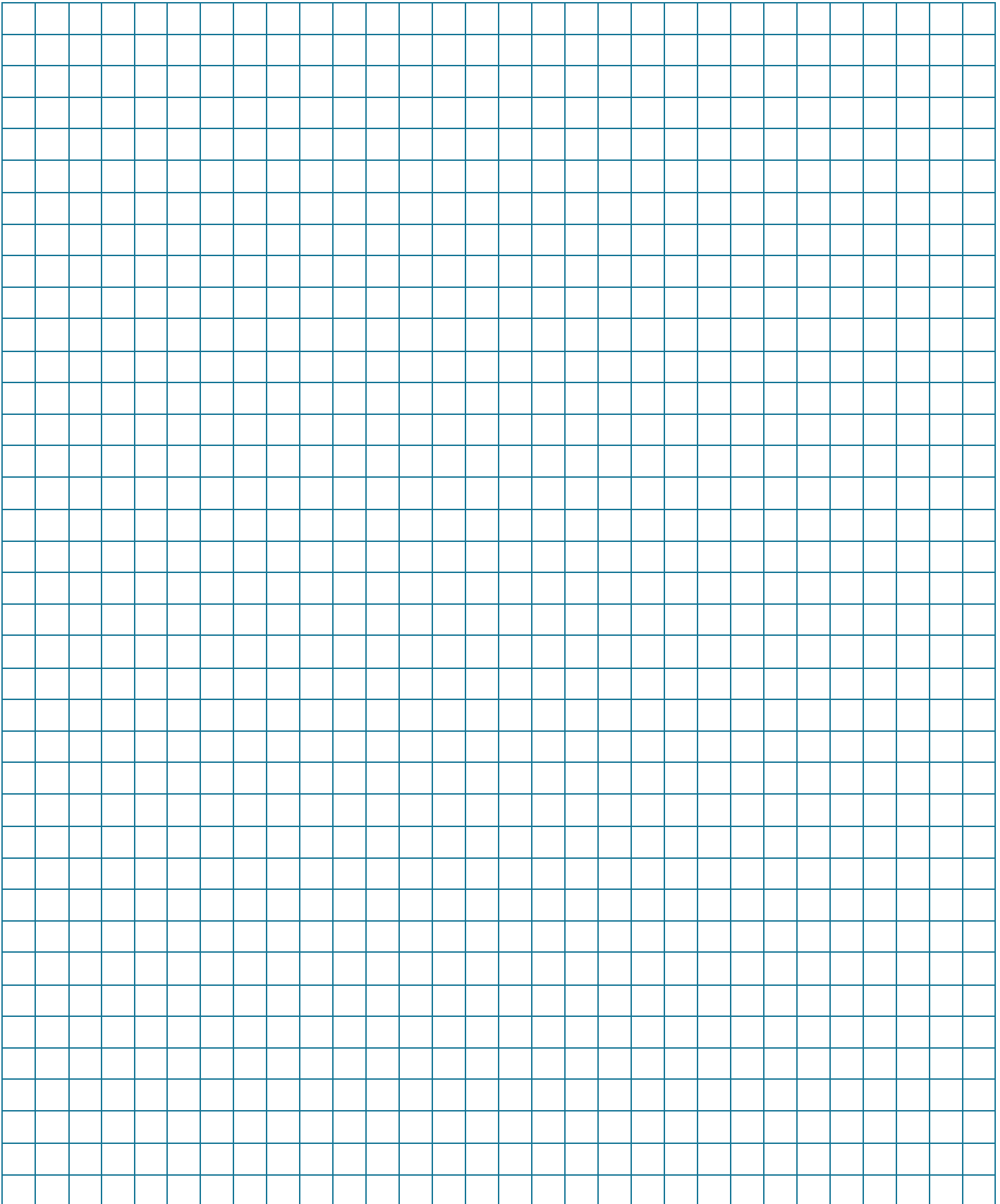
Introduction/ Thesis Statement	

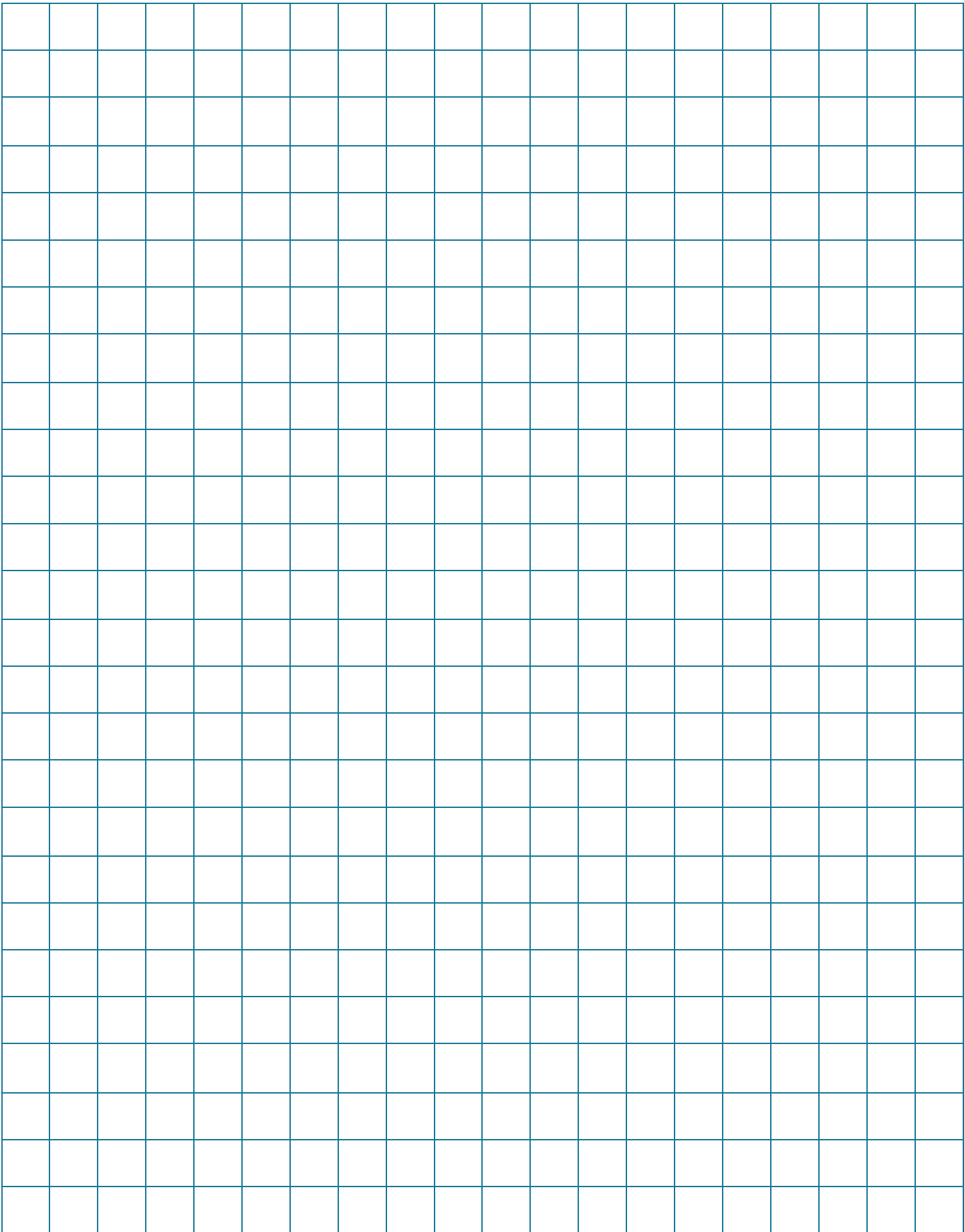
Body Paragraph 1	
Topic Sentence	
Detail 1	
Detail 2	
Detail 3	

Body Paragraph 1	
Topic Sentence	
Detail 1	
Detail 2	
Detail 3	

Body Paragraph 1	
Topic Sentence	
Detail 1	
Detail 2	
Detail 3	

Concluding Sentence	





Be a STAR – Consider *ALL* Relevant Materials

Supplies

- Pens
- Pencils
- Paper
- Ruler
- Calculator

Technology

- Assistive technology
- Computer
- Apps

Assignment

- Handouts
- Outlines
- Criteria

Resources

- Graphic organizers
- Checklists
- Formulas
- Tutors