**Directions**

Read the following selection. Then answer the questions that follow.

**How to Control Clutter**

**Maggie Garcia**

Your room didn't get messy overnight. One day, you just didn't have time to throw your dirty laundry in the hamper. The next day, you had to rush off to a music lesson in such a hurry that you wound up leaving the remains of your after-school snack on your desk: the second half of a grilled cheese sandwich

and the last few gulps of a glass of chocolate milk. Later that night, after practicing your solo for the big school concert, you decided to keep your music stand and everything set up in case you had the time to practice a little more in the morning. But when you overslept, you had to crash through that mess to be

ready in time for the bus. So, with your toppled music stand and loose music all over the floor, your violin case open nearby, pj's in a ball on top of your snarl of covers, and new CDs, balls of cellophane wrapping, and dog-eared magazines scattered around, you pulled the door shut on your room. By Friday,

**10** you were stepping carefully just to get from the door to the closet and bed without crushing anything. By then the concert was over and you wanted to celebrate with friends, not clean up. So that's what you did. Now it's Saturday morning and you have to face the music—and everything else that’s in there.

Where do you begin?

How to declutter your room . . .

**Step 1. Set clear, manageable goals.**

Choose a specific area to clean up—the floor, your bed, the closet—and focus exclusively on that area. Set an alarm clock for one hour and keep working until the alarm goes off. Then take a short break. If, after a short rest, you feel like continuing, set the alarm for another hour. Let yourself quit before

you get totally exhausted, though, so that you can feel good about your progress instead of discouraged, **20** overwhelmed, and totally deprived of fun. After all, since your room probably didn't get messy overnight, it's unlikely to get *un*messy in an hour or even in an afternoon.

**Step 2. Throw away, recycle, or give away what you don't need.**

Try to get rid of as much stuff as you can. Take a hard look at each item before you put it away, asking yourself whether you really need it or feel strongly about it. If the answer is no, pile it with other items that you will throw out, recycle, or give away. If the answer is yes, ask yourself whether you have

more of that item than you really need. If the answer is yes again, add the item to the throw-out, recycle, or give-away pile. The only exception to this rule should be items that you are collecting, such as model cars, comic books, or dolls. In addition, put items that belong somewhere other than in your room

back where they belong.

**30 Step 3. Sort what you want to keep.**

Don't just stuff everything into empty places at random. Separate the “keepers” into piles based on where you plan to put them. Here's an example:

• dresser or chest of drawers—socks, underwear, nightwear, T-shirts,

sweaters, shorts, bathing suits, and maybe miscellaneous items like keys, jewelry, and watches

• desk and bookshelves—dictionaries and other reference books, magazines, CDs, textbooks, notebooks, pens, pencils, markers, and other school supplies

• closet—jeans and long pants, dresses, skirts, shirts, jackets, sports equipment, shoes, and anything else that needs to hang or fits only in a large, open space

**Step 4. Organize what you've saved and stow it neatly.**

**40** Now group similar items together. For instance, put short-sleeved and long-sleeved shirts into separate piles. You might even further organize clothing by color so that you can find exactly what you want in a hurry.

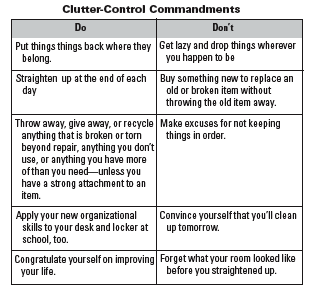
Keep school and reference books together, sorting other books by author or subject, so that you can easily reach the books you use most frequently.

Put items in collections on display or store them safely to ensure that they retain their value. For example, to keep comic books from getting creased or brittle, store them in acid-free plastic bags sandwiched between pieces of cardboard. If you don't take care of your collections, items that could have been

worth thousands of dollars could wind up being worthless!

Aside from rules governing the storage of collections, there's really no right way—or even best way—to **50** store things. Just bear in mind that your system should work for *you*, which means that it should make it easy for you to find what you need when you need it. Don't worry if you have to experiment for a

while until you find the arrangement that works best.

**Step 5. Celebrate.**

Once your room is neat and clean, reward yourself with a movie, an evening with friends, or something else you enjoy. This is a big accomplishment, and you deserve a reward!

**60 Step 6. Keep your room clutter-free.**

Keep the place from getting cluttered again by following these simple do's and don'ts:

**Directions**

Answer the following questions about “How to Control Clutter.”

1. You can infer controlling clutter may be difficult for some because the author
2. has written such a lengthy piece of text.
3. organized the text in a step-by-step process.
4. uses a bulleted list to make sure directions are clear.
5. included an informative chart to show the dos and don’ts.
6. We know the author wants her readers to stay organized because she
7. talks about throwing things away, not just putting things away.
8. includes a step on keeping your room clutter free.
9. describes a room at the start of the article.
10. uses a question early on in the text.
11. The central idea of Step 1 is supported by details that 
12. present facts.
13. tell an anecdote.
14. provide expert opinions.
15. give further explanation.
16. Who do you think is the *most* appropriate audience for this selection?
17. parents
18. musicians
19. toy collectors
20. school-age children
21. What can you infer from the information in step 4?
22. Experimenting is always necessary.
23. Storing your things should be enjoyable.
24. There is no one way to organize your room.
25. Availability of time may determine your system.
26. The most likely meaning of the word “stow” in line 39 is
27. distribute.
28. put away.
29. keep together.
30. stuff it in a container.
31. A generalization you could form after reading this article is
32. busy people have trouble with clutter.
33. most people deny having clutter.
34. clutter is always embarrassing.
35. many adults don’t have clutter.
36. Summarize the essay “How to Control Clutter.”
37. The word “frequently” in line 44 most likely means
38. rarely.
39. carefully.
40. purposely.
41. repeatedly.
42. From the details in Step 2, you can infer kids
43. keep too much stuff.
44. forget they can recycle.
45. treat collectibles carelessly.
46. clean out their rooms regularly.

REVIEW

1. Each subheading in the passage identifies a
2. tips for staying clutter-free.
3. way to organize old books.
4. reason that clutter is a problem.
5. phase in the process of cleaning.
6. Each of the bullets in step 3 identifies a
7. type of clothing.
8. place for storage.
9. method of organizing.
10. way of sorting books.

**Directions**

Read the following selection. Answer the questions that follow.

\*Adapted

**Underage and Overscheduled**

**Laura Allen**

Picture a nine-year-old boy who needs a personal organizer to keep track of his schedule. He plays soccer, ice skates, takes gymnastics, has piano lessons twice a week, participates in activities at the church, and is a member of the 4-H Club—in addition to going to school all day and doing homework and chores around the house. This boy, like a growing number of American young people, is overscheduled and dealing with the pressure of doing too much too soon.

According to child psychiatrist and author of *The Overscheduled Child*, Alvin Rosenfeld, “Overscheduling our children is not only a widespread phenomenon; it's how we parent today . . . . Children are under pressure to achieve, to be competitive. I know sixth-graders who are already working on their résumés so they'll have an edge when they apply for college.” Many kids are so busy going **10** places and doing prearranged activities that they have no time to ride their bikes, explore the

world, lie on the grass and dream or just play. And that doesn't even take into account time to sleep. A survey by the National Science Foundation reported that only one-fifth of teens in the United States get the recommended nine hours of sleep on school nights, and nearly one-half sleep less than eight hours on school nights.

**Why Does It Happen?**

Most parents want the best for their children, so why do they push them so hard? One reason is that they want to make sure their children have all the advantages they didn't have as kids. This doesn't necessarily have to be a problem. It gets out of hand when parents lose sight of the child's basic interests. As Dr.

Rosenfeld says, parenting has become “the most competitive adult sport.”

**20** Parents are worried that if their kids aren't learning or doing something every minute of the day, they won't be able to keep up with their neighbors' children. They may feel not only that their kids have failed, but also that they haven't made the grade as parents.

**How Much Is Too Much?**

There's no question that sports, lessons, social groups, and other organized activities are good for children. Participating in them can help build self-confidence, improve school performance, minimize harmful behaviors, and promote social development. These activities also can expose children to a

broad range of situations and skills and provide structure.

The important word to remember, though, is moderation. Taking part in too many activities doesn't give children a chance to explore any of them in depth and get the satisfaction of mastering them. The positive **30** effects start to get canceled out “if the child never has a chance to manage his or her time or . . . does

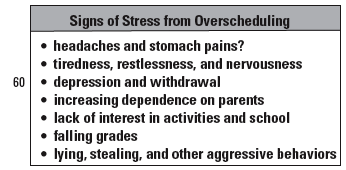
not really enjoy what he or she is doing,” says Judy Myers-Walls, an associate professor in child development and family studies.

**What Are the Effects?**

Parents think that being involved in a wide variety of activities will help develop their children's minds and bodies. Ironically, though, overscheduling can have exactly the opposite effect. Instead of opening children's minds, it can program their thinking, leaving them “no time to call on their own resources and be creative,” says Diane Ehrensaft, Ph.D., a psychologist in California.

Taking part in too many scheduled activities too soon also can harm kids in other ways. Andre Aelion Brooks, author of *Children of Fast-Track Parents*, concluded from a study of 60 parents, 100 children, **40** and 80 mental health professionals and educators that many children can't handle the pressure of so

many activities. They can react to this pressure physically, emotionally, behaviorally, or in a combination of these ways. (See *Signs of Stress from Overscheduling*.)

**50**

Overscheduling also deeps children from other experiences that are essential to their growth, such as play, family time, and time alone. The American Academy of Pediatrics says the most important ingredient in healthy development is plain old, unstructured play. Playing allows children to just be children and gives them a chance to interact with others naturally. It also helps them to learn to structure their own time.

Hanging out with both immediate and extended family gives children a sense of their roots, helps them develop trust and security, and provides support, love, and a feeling of belonging. In addition to not having enough time with important people in their lives, overscheduled kids miss out on time to be

alone with themselves and do nothing. This “nothing” is actually essential. It is the space and time for kids to gain self-awareness, discover their own interests, and express themselves in art, music, writing, or

**60** just explore their imagination and dreams.

**What's the Solution?**

The best solution to the problem of overscheduling can be summarized in a single word—relax. Parents need to try to just be themselves and let their children do the same. Paying attention and accepting exactly where their children are can help them grow at their own pace. This means giving kids space to make their own decisions and mistakes. Kids need to feel supported and safe enough to take risks. Spending focused time is the best way to build that security.

Kids should not be forced to feel that every minute of their lives is a preparation for adulthood. They need to know that they're fine right where they are. As one parent who is resisting the pressure to overschedule her two children puts it, “I truly believe that they're better off when they can just do their own thing.”

1. The best summary of this selection is
2. Sports are good for children, but too many will confuse them.
3. The signs of stress are serious and should be handled appropriately.
4. Children who are committed to a set schedule could benefit from more unplanned time.
5. Parents over-schedule children just to keep them out of trouble, not to make them healthy.
6. The author’s decision to include a chart was probably to
7. explain the levels of stress.
8. prepare parents with solutions.
9. minimize participation in sports.
10. offer an identifiable list of symptoms.
11. A generalization you could form after reading this article is
12. all children are overscheduled and should be left to play.
13. most children can benefit from a mix of structured and non-structured time.
14. all psychiatrists wish to see children become less competitive and more relaxed.
15. most parents should plan to give their children some time to develop art of music skills.
16. Which lines contain the selection’s central idea?
17. lines 1 - 2
18. lines 4 - 5
19. lines 10 - 11
20. lines 13 - 14
21. The details in lines 16 – 19 help to support the central idea because they
22. describe the effects of many activities.
23. explain what causes overscheduling.
24. show how parents are stressed out.
25. illustrate why children are tired.
26. Lines 38 - 42 support the central idea by
27. showing the negative effects of overscheduling.
28. describing how parents often push their children.
29. stating the amount of involvement that is healthy for students.
30. illustrating the various activities in which students can become involved.
31. You can infer both authors
32. want to keep kids busy.
33. feel kids are disrespectful.
34. believe parents are in control.
35. care about the well-being of children.
36. The author included the National Science Foundation’s survey in the first section to support her point that teens
37. don’t have enough time for what’s important.
38. don’t need 9 hours of sleep on school nights
39. like to stay up late at night.
40. do well under pressure.

REVIEW

1. Judy Myers-Walls is a reliable source because she 
2. is a family doctor.
3. has her own children.
4. studies how kids grow.
5. supports her ideas with proof.