

我给文具算了一笔时间账

科学课上老师教我们做实验要记录数据。那天我的文具盒乱得不成样子：铅笔这儿躺一支、那儿躺一支，橡皮被磨成了小灰球，尺子压在水彩画底下，找一样东西要翻半天。我忽然想到一个实验：我一天到底在找文具上浪费多少时间？

实验第一周，我什么也不整理，只记录。结果吓了我一跳：星期一把找橡皮的时间加起来是四分钟，星期三找尺子用了六分钟，星期五找彩笔帽找掉了心情，整整十一分钟。一周下来，我花在找文具上的时间一共四十二分钟。四十二分钟，够我读完一本薄薄的故事书，够我跳绳六百个，可是它们全部喂给了一个乱糟糟的文具盒。

第二周是整理周。我先给文具盒做一次大分类：写字的一格，画画的一格，测量修改的一格。铅笔削尖排队，彩笔按颜色从高到矮站好，尺子睡进盒盖的小夹袋，橡皮搬进右下角的小窝，卷笔刀挂在拉链上。每一样文具都有了自己的名字和门牌号，比如橡皮住在右下角，尺子住在楼上夹袋。

分类容易，难的是让分类活下去。我给自己定了个规矩：坚持一周，用完必须送回门牌号。星期二我画完画，彩笔刚想赖在纸上休息，我想起它们的门牌号，还是把它们一顶一顶戴好帽子送回了家。星期四晚上我困得眼皮打架，铅笔还摊在作业本上，我闭着一只眼也把它送了回去。星期五差点破功，同学喊我下去玩，我把最后一支笔扔在桌上就往外跑，跑到楼下又回来——实验不能断，一周就得完整。

整理后的这一周，我又记录了一遍。找文具的时间从四十二分钟变成了三分钟，其中两分钟还是我故意慢吞吞地找，想确认文具们真的在老地方。它们真的都在。考试的时候，老师一说画图，我的尺子三秒钟就到位，那种感觉特别神气，像将军拔剑。

这笔时间账让我明白了一个道理：乱，不是东西的错，是我的错；整理，也不是妈妈的任务，是我自己的事。文具不会自己长腿回家，可是我可以每天送它们回去。坚持一周，我不仅省下了将近四十分钟，还发现一个秘密——能坚持做一件小事的人，做起别的事来也敢坚持。

现在我的实验还在继续，只是期限从一周改成了一辈子。我管好了一个文具盒的时间，下一步，我想管一管写作业的时间和睡觉前的时间。一个会算时间账的小学生，长大以后应该不至于太慌张吧。

I Kept a Time Account for My Stationery

In science class our teacher taught us that experiments need recorded data. That week my pencil case was a hopeless mess: pencils lying here and there, the eraser ground into a little gray ball, the ruler buried under a watercolor painting, and finding one thing meant digging for ages. It suddenly hit me that I had an experiment idea: how much time do I actually waste hunting for stationery in a day?

For the first week of the experiment I organized nothing and only recorded. The result startled me. On Monday, hunting for the eraser added up to four minutes; on

Wednesday the ruler took six; on Friday I spent a full eleven minutes looking for a marker cap and lost my mood along the way. The whole week, I fed forty-two minutes to a messy pencil case. Forty-two minutes is enough to finish a thin storybook, enough for six hundred rope jumps, yet all of it vanished into a cluttered box.

The second week was cleanup week. First I gave the case a big sorting: one shelf for writing, one for drawing, one for measuring and correcting. Pencils went sharpened and lined up; markers stood from tallest to shortest by color; the ruler moved into the slim pocket inside the lid; the eraser moved into its little nest at the lower right; the sharpener hung on the zipper. Every item got a name and an address, like Eraser living at the lower right corner and Ruler living upstairs in the pocket.

Sorting is easy; keeping the sorting alive is hard. I set a rule for myself: hold it for one week, and after every use walk each item back to its address. On Tuesday, after painting, the markers tried to lounge on the paper, but I remembered their addresses and walked them home one cap at a time. Thursday night my eyes were heavy, yet a pencil still lay on my homework, and I carried it back with one eye shut. Friday nearly broke me: a classmate shouted for me to come play, and I tossed the last pen onto the desk and bolted, only to run back downstairs — an experiment cannot have holes; a week must be whole.

During the organized week I recorded again. Hunting time dropped from forty-two minutes to three, and two of those minutes I spent deliberately dawdling, just to confirm the items really were where they always are. They really were. In a test, the moment the teacher said draw a diagram, my ruler was in position in three seconds. It felt magnificent, like a general drawing his sword.

This time account taught me a lesson: the mess is not the things' fault, it is mine; and tidying is not Mom's job, it is mine. Stationery cannot grow legs and walk home, but I can walk them home every day. Holding on for one week saved me nearly forty minutes and revealed a secret — a person who can stick with one small thing dares to stick with other things too.

My experiment is still running; I simply changed the deadline from one week to a lifetime. I have managed the time of one pencil case. Next I want to manage the time of my homework and the time before bed. A primary school student who keeps a time account probably will not panic too much when he grows up.