

文具盒倒在桌上的那个周六

英语听力考试还有两分钟开始，老师让我们把答题卡填好。我伸手进文具盒摸铅笔，摸到半块橡皮，摸到一把断了的直尺，还摸到一块饼干。铅笔终于被我摸出来了，笔帽却不见了，笔尖在答题卡上划出一道白印子。同桌把他的备用笔推过来，小声说，你用我的。

那天回家，我把文具盒倒在书桌上。倒出来的东西把我自己吓了一跳：七支笔，其中三支写不出字；两块橡皮，一块断成三角形，一块黑得看不清原来的颜色；一把尺子缺了角，一个圆规少了一条腿，还有弹珠、贴纸、两节不知道从哪台遥控器上拆下来的电池。文具盒的夹层早就被撑变形了，拉链拉到一半就卡住。

我妈站在门口说，你这盒子比你的书包还乱。我想反驳，可是手里正拿着那支写不出字的笔。

周六上午，我决定给文具盒来一次大清点。先把所有东西倒在桌上，一支一支试，写不出的、断的、没用的，全部放进一个旧铁盒里准备扔掉。剩下的东西我按用途分开：写字的笔放最前面，改错用的橡皮和尺子放中间，备用铅笔和笔芯放最后的小格子。透明袋里只留第二天要用的那几样。全部放回去之后，文具盒合上，居然扣得上了。

真正想不到的变化发生在三天以后。老师布置周末计划，让我们把要做的事列出来。我列着列着，忽然想起文具盒里的三个格子，就在计划表上画了三栏：明天必须交的，这周能完成的，前两样做完才轮到我的。语文、数学、英语的事分进去，哪一栏空了就看哪一栏。以前我列计划，十件事挤在一起，像以前那个文具盒，什么都想找，什么都找不到。现在三栏分开，先看哪一栏、再做哪一栏，心里一下子清楚了。

这个月的月考，开考铃响之前，我打开文具盒：三支笔削好了排在最前面，橡皮和尺子在中间，答题卡从透明袋里抽出来。文具盒放在桌角，没有发出一点声音。

我以前觉得整理文具盒是小事，浪费学习时间。现在我知道不是。盒子乱的时候，我每找一样东西都要停一下，思路断一下，一天要断几十次。盒子归了位，手不用找，脑子就顾得上题。整理盒子不是学习的全部，可它是把乱日子理顺的头一件小事。

The Saturday I Dumped My Pencil Case on the Desk

Two minutes before the listening exam, the teacher told us to fill in our answer sheets. I reached into my pencil case for a pencil and pulled out half an eraser, a broken ruler, and a piece of cookie. When I finally found a pencil, its cap was gone, and the dry tip left a white scratch on the card. My deskmate pushed his spare pen over and whispered, use mine.

That evening I turned my pencil case upside down on the desk. The pile surprised me: seven pens, three of them dead; two erasers, one broken into a triangle, one black beyond its original color; a ruler with a chipped corner, a compass missing a leg, plus marbles, stickers, and two batteries from some remote control. The divider inside had long been stretched out of shape, and the zipper stuck halfway.

My mother stood in the doorway and said my case was messier than my schoolbag. I wanted to argue, but I was holding one of the dead pens.

On Saturday morning I gave the case a full inventory. I tested every pen, and everything dry, broken, or useless went into an old tin box for the trash. I sorted the rest by use: writing pens in front, eraser and ruler in the middle, spare pencils and leads in the back pocket. Only the items for the next day stayed in the clear sleeve. When everything was back, the case closed with a snap.

The real change came three days later. Our teacher asked us to list our weekend plans, and as I wrote, I remembered the three pockets in my case. I drew three columns on the plan sheet: due tomorrow, done this week, and only after the first two. Chinese, math, and English tasks went into the columns. Before, my plans looked like my old pencil case, ten things jammed together, and I could never find anything. With three columns, I knew which column to look at first, and everything became clear.

At the monthly test this month, before the bell, I opened my case: three sharpened pens in front, eraser and ruler in the middle, and the answer sheet slid out of the clear sleeve. The case sat in the corner of the desk without a sound.

I used to think tidying a pencil case wasted study time. Now I know it does not. When the case was messy, every search stopped me for a second, and my thinking broke dozens of times a day. When everything has its place, my hands stop searching and my mind can stay on the problem. Tidying the case is not everything about studying, but it is the first small thing that straightens out a messy day.