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ORGANIZE YOUR LIFE!

TIME MANAGEMENT FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR

1. Paperwork:

First things first. Along with your younger children, go through their school bags immediately when they arrive home. Have a slot or a file for each kid to put their paperwork in. Even though kids do most of their homework on the computer nowadays, each day you will be bombarded with paperwork, so it is essential to keep on your kids so that they are on top of their homework. In addition you most likely will have forms to fill out, such as permission slips, and activities to do with them. Filling out forms immediately and putting them back into their bag for school the next day will put you at piece of mind and eliminate early morning rushing.

2. Extracurricular Activities:

Try to limit their extracurricular activities to three per/year (such as hockey, soccer, and baseball), so that they still have time for homework and family time. Too many activities can be chaotic for you and your kids. While extracurricular activities are great for social skills, for time management, setting up boundaries for kids on how many responsibilities they can take on is too. Sit down with your child look at his/her calendar to see the whole year. Together map out how much time each extracurricular activity will take. Have he/she weigh out social activities, homework, family, and just plain being a kid. Let the child make the choice of what extracurricular things they want to take on, but keep the number down so that they do not overburden themselves, like we all tend to do!

3. Rise and Shine and Bed Time Routines:

Being sure your kids have daily routines around getting to bed and getting up are very important as well. As they get older their extracurricular activities will become more demanding and this will become more of an issue – that is why starting them off early with good time management tools is essential. Have their bathrooms well organized with shower caddies for each kid so that they have what they need (toothbrush, toothpaste, washcloth, soap, acne medicine and deodorant for pre-teens) for the evening and morning so they can get ready quickly and independently. If they do have a late night this will cut the time to get ready for bed, and get ready for the day. One bonus is, if they can shorten the time it takes to get ready in the morning and at night, they can get more sleep!

4. Family Calendars:

Have a calendar in a common area of the home (such as the kitchen refrigerator or cork board) with all of the dates and time of\*:

- Drs. appointments
- sports, drama, or music practices
- dance or music recitals
- sports games
- teacher/parent conferences
- any schools holidays or half days that require baby sitters and chauffeuring
- meal planning
- homework schedules and due dates, exams etc.

# SIMPLE HABITS TO HELP ORGANIZE YOUR LIFE

## 5. Scheduling Homework:

As a way of helping your kids manage their time better, try having your kids show you what is due for school for the week and the month. Sometimes, they are given a paper or project that is due at the end of the week or month to give them time to do adequate research. If you know about it, you can teach them to prepare ahead of time and not leave it to the last minute. This is an excellent time management skill that will prepare them for further education. It is also a great way to stay involved in your kids' lives.

\*Be sure that you and your kids put all of the appointments that are on the kitchen calendar into your own personal calendars as well, so that there are no mix ups. Purchase a day planner for your kid and teach them how to use it. If they are not old enough for a day planner, work with your kids on writing the schedule out on the kitchen calendar, so that they are a part of the process. The more they are around time management systems, the better off they will be!



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# ORGANIZING THE ENTRYWAY TO STREAMLINE FLOW INTO THE HOUSE

Coming into the house with your hands full of bags, keys, your briefcase and the like can be frustrating when you don't know what to do with all of it. That is why it is essential to have a system set up to take care of all of that clutter as soon as you walk in. By having a designated place for it, you can avoid the chaos! The ideal solutions are hooks, shelves and bins.

Let's create places for the following:

Hats & gloves - use separate baskets or bins for each person in the family, this way they can put their stuff away with ease and find it immediately when running out the door. Be sure to label the bin/basket, or you can use clear bins, or color code them for each person. If your kids are still small, be sure to put the bins an appropriate height so that they can get to their stuff on their own.

Coats - Hooks are great for coats. (<http://tinyurl.com/k72ka>) Or, if room permits, you can purchase a bench system to store shoes, and accessories, while hooks will store coats (<http://tinyurl.com/ob5zy>). Any overflow can go into the hall closet. Just be sure to keep what is currently being worn near the door.

Shoes - Where oh where do all the shoes go? If you have a single door you can add a very narrow bench (<http://tinyurl.com/s7o7p>), behind the door, under which you can store a few pairs of shoes along with a series of hooks above head. If you have a double door entry, you'll probably have to use the hall closet, and might want to suggest that the family take their shoes off at the door.

Keys – ladies, if you carry a hand bag, or briefcase try using a link or clip (<http://tinyurl.com/p9gtc> or <http://tinyurl.com/q3dhw>) that clips onto it. If you don't carry either, have a tray (<http://tinyurl.com/qmzeb>) set up that holds your keys, wallet, and cell phone. Guys, a

valet is a perfect solution for always knowing where your keys are.

The Mounting Mail and Paper Mess– have a basket handy near the door that can be filled with mail, or just carry it in immediately to the kitchen/office area, or to the office. Just be sure to go through it right away, toss any junk mail out, and pay the bills promptly. Remember, don't put it in a pile and forget about it. There are a few ways to store the paper that piles up. This is a great tool: <http://tinyurl.com/rhhn7>. The kitchen is a good place (especially if you don't have an office) to store the paperwork either in a series of slots in a paper sorter for each person in the household, or a file folder. A tack board is ideal for announcements, such as upcoming weddings (be sure to still put them on the calendar!) (Here is how to make a tack board from HGTV: <http://tinyurl.com/pst9w>)

Things to Return – We always have movies, library books, and items to return to friends or work. A hanging basket/bin/bag is a great way to remember to take this with us. If you don't like the look of something hanging on your door, you can also have an errand bag in your office or kitchen as a reminder to take things with you. If you have a hard time remembering to take it, or what is in it, put it on your calendar or a to-do list.



Having a clutter free entry way is essential to start and end your day. If you know where to put things when you exit and enter the house, it will give you a sense of ease. If your house is in disarray, just starting with cleaning the entryway is a great way to have the feeling of instant gratification.

Dear Leslie,

My whole house is a disaster, where do I start?!

- Overwhelmed in Ocean Shores

This is an excellent question! It's so hard to know where to begin when there is so much to do, and I am sure you are feeling incredibly overwhelmed. The first thing is to sit down and take a breather. Remind yourself that you will get this done eventually. I would suggest breaking it down into steps as follows:

1. Determine which room should be organized first. I know you're thinking - ALL OF THEM - but you need to start with just one, and move from there. Think of the place where you spend the most time and that causes the most chaos in your life. Think about what room is causing you to be late, causes the most stress, makes you not want to have people over spontaneously, or causes you to lose things. Is it the kitchen, where all of the papers are piled on all of your eating surfaces? Is it your closet, where you can't see the bottom of the floor? Or is it your guest bedroom that has become a dumping ground for all of your clutter?

While the whole house is interrelated, choosing the room that is the most bothersome will help reach the core of the problem, or at least get you started!

Remember, start with just ONE room.

2. After you have determined the project room, start in one corner (as if you were tiling the floor) and begin to slowly sort into piles, deciding what to keep, what to toss and what to donate or sell. Start by doing a little of the room at a time to see how it goes. Go easy on yourself at first, cleaning only for a pre-set amount of time-say two hours. Then allocate a few

hours every day over for the next couple of weeks to continue working on the room until it is organized. You'll be amazed at how quickly it goes.

After each sorting session you will have piles of things that need homes. I'm sure you already have some storage items that your things can be stored in. I suggest not purchasing any organizing supplies until you are completely done sorting the entire room to make sure that you purchase enough storage for it all. If some of the items are left astray, put the likes with likes into piles (books with books, etc). If the items are small enough, put them into zip lock bags, until you are ready to put everything away.

Make sure that once you have sorted through every thing you have allocated a place for everything so that each time you use something you know exactly where to put it.

3. Go to the store and purchase the organizing tools you will need to keep the systems you set up running smoothly! For advice on buying storage bins refer to my December newsletter: <http://tinyurl.com/pzyye> , or visit <http://www.thecontainerstore.com>

If you are still feeling overwhelmed (which is VERY normal) invite your family members in on the organizing (you might have to set up a reward system, but believe me, it will be worth it!) This will help lighten your load, inform them about the importance of being organized and help them to where everything is being stored.