

Home Management 101

Tags: [home life](#)

As I have struggled to maintain a household, I have discovered that managing a household involves an understanding of two key elements: inventory and maintenance. Everything we do falls into one of these categories.. Inventory items keep the family moving and spontaneous. These items are their needs. Most times these things cannot be delayed. They include food, clean clothes, etc. I have to feed my children. They need to wear clean clothes. I have to pay the electricity bill, because I need lights. These things cannot be delayed. Maintenance items can be delayed. The kitchen floor may be sticky, but the family will still function. Your windows may be full of grime, but you can still see out of them. I don't advocate sticky floors or grimey windows but I hope you get my point. Inventory items should be taken care of first in your home. This will free you to address maintenance issues.

Laundry

One important inventory item is the laundry. This is a job with various steps. Often we neglect to think through the whole process; therefore, we do not complete the laundry in a one-time segment. Reduce the steps you take when doing laundry and you'll see what I mean. I hate doing laundry therefore I do it everyday. No, its not some redemptive character building spiritual exercise, I simply hate dealing with the volume of laundry so I try to do it everyday so it doesn't pile up. With a husband who goes to the gym daily and three active kids this is actually quite easy for me. Also get help from others. Train little ones to sort the laundry and older ones to help. Teenagers should definitely be doing their own laundry. My kids have their own laundry baskets, so they fold and put away their own clothes. We have had a only one floods in the basement when the kids wanted to surprise me for Mother's Day by doing the laundry.

Meals

The other area in the home that is of major concern is meal preparation. This too is a multi-faceted task. It involves shopping, planning, preparing and cooking. The time spent in this area also can be reduced. You should only be going to the grocery store once a week or less. This can surely be accomplished with some planning. First, visit the store you frequent the most and write down the items in each aisle. Next, type it up, if possible. Photocopy it. Write your grocery list on it; it will reduce your shopping time. You can post the paper in the kitchen when you notice you are low on an item you can simply write it on the list. This will keep you from running out of items and from going to the store so frequently. It also speeds up the time when you are in the store. You should also write out tentative menus for a week and go shopping for these items at one time. For working moms, there are so many great cookbooks with simple meals that do not take long to prepare. Take time every Saturday to plan the next week's meals. I try to plan for two weeks worth of meals. Do not forget the kids' snacks and lunch foods. You can also cook double portions when you cook; freeze the second portion. You may also cook for two weeks, or even a month at a time, if you have the freezer space. Usually I purchase prepared foods when they go on sale. This helps at times.

Paper Management

As I share in my home management workshops, managing the mail saved my marriage...only joking! Seriously though, every family should have a paper management plan. You may get colored folders from an Office Supply Store, or Walmart—they have it for only \$4.00. It usually goes on sale right after Christmas which is usually when I replace my worn folders. Every piece of mail should be placed immediately in one of the following folders, or tossed in the trash immediately! Label your folders as following:

Red: To Pay
White: To Do
Yellow: To Hold
Green: To File
Blue: Spouse

Orange: To Read

Red — Your fiscal folder holds all your bills, which need to be paid. A calendar should be placed inside the folder so that you can see when a particular bill is due.

White — This action folder contains those things you will take immediate action on..

Yellow — This pending folder is to put things on hold and you will eventually use but do not need to be filed away such as a wedding invitation directions, trash schedule, etc.

Green — This filing folder is for all those items that should be filed away at a later date in your household file cabinet.

Blue — The spouse folder is for correspondence relating to your spouse. Now the mail is in one uniform spot for him to read.

Orange — The reading folder is for any mail that will take over ten minutes to read.

Family Schedules

Another area of home management involves scheduling and time-management. A family calendar is a necessity; list kids' scouting meetings, recitals, plays, trips, etc. Put down your commitments too. Everyone should use the family calendar. You can refer to it before you make a commitment. It also helps to slow down the pace of the family a bit. You can put in the family meetings and special dinners, etc., you want all of the family to be there for. Calendars are great! You should also have your own personal calendar and make appointments with yourself. These appointments can be for personal development, spiritual growth, etc. Either way, post them so family members will know you are unavailable at these times. You need to make the time to fill yourself up before you pour into others. Mothers, particularly, spend much time pouring into the lives of others, yet very little time filling themselves back up.

You can also reduce a lot of stress by having a family bulletin board / communication center. I have one in the kitchen. You can use a horizontal file folder or cover a cereal box with contact paper. Train your children to put notes in the box. This way you can read them at your leisure and not when you are cooking dinner, or otherwise occupied. The communication center can also be used to place encouraging notes to other family members. You can also have a suggestion box. The suggestion box can be used for kids and adults to write down their ideas about how the family can effectively function. A calendar should be near the family communication center.

These are just a few ideas that can help you to run your family more efficiently. Household management involves developing good habits and remember a habit is something you do without thinking. Good thinking forms good habits. We as moms set the standard for our households with our habits. It is not so important that are homes are squick and span clean but they we are constantly working to improve our home management skills to serve our families.

A Few Helpful Household Habits and Tips

- Use baskets to put small items in so you do not have to search for small items like clippers and hair brushes, etc.
- Wet your child's shoelaces before tying them. You won't have to re-tie them all day.
- Put a steno pad (instead of a tear-off pad) and pen near your telephone. No more little pieces of paper.
- Purchase indoor / outdoor olefin or propylene mats to catch incoming dirt.
- "Everyday"-do an inventory task in your home: wash dishes, laundry, clean up, etc. Seems simple but if we stay on top of inventory items our family will keep running smoothly.
- Allow children to only play with a few toys at a time. Small children become overwhelmed with too many toys.
- Post a family calendar in the kitchen. Encourage everyone to use it . Post ministry events that will affect the whole family on it.
- Purchase individual laundry baskets (assorted colors) so children can sort and put away laundry. If you have a 99 cent store close by you may be able to get assorted colors.
- Guard against perfectionism: clean for hygienic reasons, not just for aesthetic beauty.
- Label kids' bureau drawers so they will put clothes in the right ones. Use pictures (i.e. from magazines) for small children who cannot read yet.
- Post chores chart so everyone knows who is responsible for what job.
- Put a ribbon on your car antenna so you can quickly locate where you parked your car in a mall or in a parking lot full of home-school vans.
- Carry a calculator and coupon file with you to the supermarket.
- Write down the aisles of your favorite supermarket. Photocopy it. Make your grocery list using the aisles as a guide. It will significantly cut down on your time in the store.
- Make a master list of grocery staples. Post it on your refrigerator. Encourage everyone (within reason) to check off needed items.
- Plan your menus with a "quick-meals" cookbook. Your local library has plenty. Try the ones for working mothers. You'd be surprised at the quick recipes we home-schooling moms can use.
- Do your major cleaning in the Fall, not the Spring. Your efforts will last longer. Many mistakably believe Spring cleaning is best, but you should really deep clean in the Fall right before you're about to close your home up for the winter.

- Let the cleaning products do the work for you. Spray and wait for the chemicals to do the work. Always clean by circling the room like the hands on a clock.
- Have a place for sale circulars. When a new one arrives, throw out the old one.
- Open your mail near a wastebasket. Toss junk mail immediately.
- Let your children make cards for friends' and relatives' birthdays and special occasions. They can also draw on old paper to make gift wrap.
- Plan times to purge your family home files. Make it your goal to trash an outdated file each time you file a new file.
- Instead of nagging, just state the obvious and give the person the opportunity to correct it. For instance, "I see socks on the living room floor."
- Give children their own small pitchers to pour their own juice or milk. This will help little ones feel more independent and keeps you from just jumping up to prepare them juice all the time.
- Assign teenagers (both male and female) a day to cook dinner. They should be responsible for planning, shopping, etc. This task teaches them budgeting skills and practical household management. Your daughters will be well prepared and your future daughter-in-laws will thank you.
- Train pre-teens to plan, shop and prepare family meals. As teens, assign them the tasks. Assign them cooking days. Schedule the time to train your children in your household schedule.
- Invest in a deep freezer. It reduces shopping time, and allows you to freeze meals. Plan to cook once a week. Make it a regular practice to prepare two portions of meals when cooking. You may also reach out to single people in your congregations or new mothers.
- Purchase a daily planner / organizer for yourself. It does not have to be expensive, an ordinary small notebook will do. Carry it everywhere with you. Or get a Palm Pilot if you're technically inclined. · Let your children wear home-school uniforms (i.e. sweat suits) that you don't care if it gets hopelessly stained. Of course, you should have a separate set of church/ out of house activity clothes. We should represent the kingdom well.
- Set the table for breakfast the night before church. Pack bags for church and place by the door.
- Plan a family clean-up day regularly as part of the home-school routine.
- Put a shower cleanser in your bathroom in a spray bottle so family members can use it easily. Add a little baby shampoo, it cuts body oil and will reduce scrubbing.
- Purchase a book on child development so you know if your expectations of your child are reasonable.
- Use nylon shower balls instead of washcloths. Get a different color for each family member. Toss shower balls in the laundry weekly to sterilize them.
- Use watered down anti-bacterial soap in a pump for kids in the bathroom. They always pump too much anyway. (You can also substitute anti-bacterial dish washing detergent. It can also be more economical).
- Make home-school box for kids. Put in pencils, crayons, rulers, etc. Items will always be handy. Older students should be responsible for their own school supplies.
- Make incentive charts for young children to encourage household cooperation.
- Put a folder in your kitchen or bedroom for children to place activity notes (ie. AWANA, scouting information, test to be graded, Co-op, etc.)
- State family rules in the affirmative instead of the negative. They sound less punitive.
- Use paper plates, cups and bowls especially when you've had a hectic week.
- If you don't have a personal spot in your home create one. Make a basket and put in your favorite book, a journal, etc. Teach children not to disturb you in your special spot unless someone's about to lose a limb or the fire department is at the front door

Author: Cheryl R. Carter

Source URL (retrieved on 05/18/2013 - 6:15pm): <http://www.iche.org/resources/article/01-25-2010/home-management-101>