

Planning Strategies for Home and Work

Planning can be a difficult skill for some, while others find it easy to plan in many areas of their lives. But even if you aren't a natural planner, you can learn skills that will help you organize and prioritize tasks and events. This can ultimately help you reduce unnecessary stress and increase your productivity. In fact, the better prepared you are for handling life's challenges the more likely you are to achieve your goals and fulfill your dreams.



Health and Wellness

Use the tips below to help improve your planning skills at home and at work.

At Home

Prioritize What's Most Important

Start by writing a list of ten things that are important in your household, from preparing meals to spending quality time with your spouse.

Clarify Expectations

Next, look at your priorities. What do you expect of the family members who are involved with each priority and what do they expect of you? Speak to your family about which priorities they are a part of and what each person can do to help fulfill the priority.

Taking Care of High Priority Items

The following tips can help you plan for typical high priority items:

- **Set aside time to spend with family members.** No matter how busy you are, take time to communicate to each family member how much you value them.
- **Use a family calendar to write down appointments, practices, meetings and special occasions.** Invite your family to use the calendar and post it in a place where everyone can see it.
- **Organize the household by shopping for groceries and doing laundry in advance.** Keep foods that can be easily cooked when you're running late, and try to throw in a load of laundry before you sit down to watch a favorite television show or play a game.

- **Keep a list of your children's and spouse's clothing sizes.** Write down their favorite colors and styles. Choose clothing that is durable and simple. When children are old enough, let them shop for their clothing to free up some of your time.
- **Plan for emergencies.** Create a list of friends and family members who can help during stressful times. Keep copies of the list by the phone and give a copy to each family member. Consider giving a neighbor spare keys to your house and try to find sitters or day care centers that you can use at a moment's notice.
- **Plan for being away.** If you have to go away suddenly or have to stay overtime at work, make sure that your family can follow routines in your absence. Cook and freeze meals ahead of time, and if children are old enough, show them how to do household tasks like running the dishwasher.

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At Work

Planning for Long- and Short-Term Goals

When planning for success at work, start by establishing long- and short-term goals. These goals will tell you what to focus on and what you ultimately want to achieve.

Analyze Your Goals

Look at each goal you've created and define the tasks needed to accomplish it. Set deadlines and plan to reward yourself once you've accomplished the goal.

Use a Planner

Take advantage of yearly, monthly, weekly and daily charts to map out your schedule of tasks. Cross off tasks and goals as you fulfill them.

Prioritize Daily

Your weekly planning chart will help you make to-do lists for each day. Before you start your day, write down a list of priorities. Then, write down an A, B, or C next to each priority, according to these rules;

- **Priority A - Must-Do Items.** Priority A items are your most important tasks. Do these right away.
- **Priority B - Should-Do Items.** Should-Do Items don't have to be done today, but should be accomplished very soon.
- **Priority C - Nice-to-Do Items.** These items can be postponed or left as long-term goals.

Delegating Duties

If you can, cross-train your coworkers so they can help when you are absent. Try to balance your workload and give others credit if they assist you in performing tasks.

Meet with Colleagues and Customers at Appropriate Times

Schedule meeting times with colleagues to avoid workplace disruptions. If you spend a lot of time on the phone, make a list of people you frequently call. When you think of something to discuss with the person, make a note of it under their name. Then, when you talk to them next, you can address everything you need to.

