

The Planning
Woman's
Ultimate Guide
To a
Productive Day

A Step-by-Step Plan
To Help You Get the Most
Out of Your Life



The Planning Woman

Hello, Friend!

Welcome to The Planning Woman's Ultimate Guide to a Productive Day. I'm looking forward to walking with you through the process of discovering how you can become more productive.

Imagine what it would be like to come to the end of each day knowing you did your best and were able to accomplish the most important tasks that needed to be done that day. What freedom and satisfaction that will bring!

This step-by-step guide will take you through a series of exercises to help you discover how you are currently managing your time, evaluate how you are spending your time, and develop routines that will make the most of your time.

This guide is not about goal setting. It is a tool to help you manage your time for your real life. While goals are interwoven in our daily activities, we will not be focusing on how to set and complete goals.

I am so excited to get started on this journey with you...let's go!

Jennifer

Step 1: Determine Your Current Responsibilities

Before we can decide what it means to be productive, we must first take a look at our current responsibilities. These are tasks that we HAVE to do. Because these tasks are so important, they require prime space in our schedules.

There are many ways you can list out your responsibilities. You can simply just sit down with a piece of paper and write them all out as they come to mind. That is if you can trust your memory!

I think a more effective way of listing them out is to create categories. I have found it helpful to divide my responsibilities between the categories of personal, business/work, and other.

Here is a sample of what my lists of responsibilities look like:

Personal

- Laundry
- Cleaning
- Grocery Shopping
- Meal Planning
- Meal Preparation
- Time with husband
- Time with each kid
- Develop relationship with God
- Exercise

Business

- Work at church 1 day per week
- Write 1 blog post per week
- Write for Missions Mosaic Magazine
- Social Media
- Email
- Projects
- Coaching clients

Other

- Teach GA (Girls missions group)
- ABN Board (a local newspaper)

I also have created lists of things I'd like to start doing.

Personal

Crafting/stamping weekly
Organizing my home

Business

Starting a Podcast
Writing a book

Other

Getting together for lunch with friends
Having people over once or twice a month
Mentoring

What responsibilities do you have? List them out here:

Personal

Business/Work

Other

Step 2: Determine What Life Looks Like Now

Before we can get to where we want to go we need to assess where we are right now. Included in this section is a blank schedule template. You will fill this out once now with your current obligations, then you will fill out another copy of it later when it's time to create your personalized productive day.

Fill out the blank schedule with set in stone times such as work hours, travel to and from work, weekly meetings, standing appointments, kid's activities (and related travel), sleep, and meals.

Basically you want to record anything you've already committed to as well as tasks that need to be done for you and/or your family to function well. You can add in your routines such as when you get up, get ready, exercise, meal plan, meal prep, and do laundry. You want to have a realistic look at how you are spending your time.

Once you have the schedule filled out, spend a couple of days evaluating it and deciding if there are any things that need to be moved around. Again, the goal is to have a realistic picture of how your current schedule really looks.

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Step 3: Identify Time Wasters and Distractions

Now that you have a clear picture of how your time is being spent, it's time to take a look at where you may be wasting time.

We all have time wasters in our lives. Because everyone is distracted or enticed by different things, the key is to figure out what our individual time wasters are.

The best way I've found to identify how you are wasting time or may be interrupted is to simply keep a log of how you spend your time for a couple of days.

While we've already had a look at what your schedule is like right now, sometimes what's on paper doesn't tell the whole story. Most likely you did not include things like social media, email, unexpected phone calls, delays while running errands, etc.

Write down how you spend your time for a few days. This would include noting when you start and stop each activity from the time you get out of bed in the morning until you turn out the light to go to sleep in the evening. Include every time you are interrupted while doing one task and every time you find yourself distracted. Don't forget to note what the distractions and interruptions are.

Once you've done this for a couple of days, you will probably notice a pattern. Or, at the very least, you will see what things entice you away from what you are supposed to be doing.

Step 4: Evaluate Your Tasks

By now you have a good idea of how you are currently spending your time and where you may be distracted or wasting time. Let's turn our focus back to the responsibilities you listed in Step 1.

I would guess that most of your responsibilities are mainly a series of tasks. For instance, I listed laundry as one of my responsibilities. Getting the laundry done includes the tasks of gathering, sorting, washing, drying, folding, and putting away the laundry.

To simplify my life and to free up some of my time, it is important that I delegate some of the tasks related to laundry. My kids help gather the laundry by bringing their own clothes down to the laundry sorter. Then they sort their clothes. They also help by putting away their clothes once I've washed, dried, and folded them. This has been a tremendous help over the last few years.

Take a look at your current responsibilities and break them down into the tasks related to them. Then determine if any of the individual tasks can be delegated to someone else.

You may even realize there are a few tasks you are doing that are completely unnecessary. Consider deleting those tasks to help free up time.

It's all too easy to continue accepting new responsibilities and the tasks that go along with them. If you are like me, you may have a hard time saying no. So, it's important to routinely evaluate your responsibilities and see how you can pare them down to only the necessary.

Step 5: Take Into Account Your Energy Levels

Some people find they work best in the mornings. Others feel more productive in the evenings. I find I work best from about 10am-2pm.

To ensure that you have the most productive day possible, it's important for you to determine when you have the most energy and can focus on the work that needs to be done.

For example, if you are a morning person, knock out your biggest and most challenging work first. Then, use the afternoon and evening for more low energy tasks.

Or, if you are an evening person you may want to start your day with easier tasks and progress to the tasks that need more of your focus later in the day.

Not sure when you work best?

Ask yourself these questions:

1. When during the day do I have the most energy and amount of concentration?
2. When do I have the fewest interruptions and distractions?

If you are still not sure after asking yourself these questions, then ask a family member or co-worker if they notice when you seem to be most energized.

Doing our work during the times we are most energized and able to concentrate with minimal distractions will set us up for great productivity.

Step 6: Build in White Space

None of us can function going 24 hours a day 7 days a week. We need sleep but we also need pauses between each activity. Running from one activity to the next will only burn us out.

When you are evaluating your schedule and trying to be more productive, it's important to build in white space. Think of white space as a buffer to allow you a chance to breathe between activities or tasks.

To implement white space into your schedule, make sure you leave 10-15 minutes minimum between each task and activity.

Building in white space in your schedule also ensures you will have room for tasks or activities that may take longer than planned.

Take a look at your current schedule. Are your activities and tasks scheduled one right behind the other? If so, consider moving some of them around to allow white space.

Step 7: The Importance of Developing Routines

One of the easiest, most effective ways to make the best use of our time is to develop routines. Routines allow you to take care of certain tasks without much thought.

Some people resist having a routine because they think it will hinder spontaneity and force them to be rigid in their schedules. In my opinion, though, it's certainly not anything super structured.

I like to think of a routine as a guide to help you accomplish certain tasks.

For example, I have an evening routine I follow that helps to set me up for success the next day.

This is what my evening routine looks like:

9:00 run dishwasher, take medicine, check calendar for next day, thaw meat for dinner if needed, pick up and put things away

9:20 take off makeup, dress for bed, decide what to wear the next day

9:30 read, journal

10:00 lights out

I have added times to my routine to help me stay on task and get in bed on time. If I don't get to sleep by 10:00 or shortly after, I have a much harder time getting up the next morning.

There are many types of routines you can develop that will make getting some of your responsibilities done with little effort or thought.

Routines for the morning, middle of the day, when your children get home from school, and early evening can help a lot when trying to manage your time wisely.

Think through activities you do on a regular basis and see how you can incorporate them into routines.

Step 8: Create Your New Schedule

Now that you've determined what activities or responsibilities you can delete or delegate, created white space, and developed routines, you can create a new schedule that will make the best use of your time.

Fill out the blank schedule that follows taking into account to all the changes you've made to the schedule you made in Step 2.

If you've followed all the steps in this guide, you should have a clearer picture of what is truly important in your life and what can be deleted or delegated.

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Step 9: Reflect and Adjust

Remember that as your seasons of life change, your schedule will need occasional tweaking. Our lives are filled with constant change so it's important that those changes be reflected in your schedule.

For instance, I still have children at home. However, in just a couple of short years, my husband and I will be empty nesters. My responsibilities will change dramatically and I will have to adjust my schedule to reflect those changes.

Also, you may try to follow your new schedule and find it's still not working as well as you'd like. It's perfectly normal to make adjustments until you hit that sweet spot where you are being more productive.

A word of caution: Every day will not be perfectly productive. Life happens, interruptions happen, lots of things happen over which we have no control.

As long as you keep moving forward and are seeing progress, you can consider yourself a success.

Step 10: Next Steps

Hopefully you have discovered some things about your life that have helped you to develop a schedule that sets you up for a productive day.

If not, you may decide you could use additional help to figure things out.

I would be happy to work with you personally to develop a schedule that works for you. Through a series of life coaching sessions, we can walk through the steps of this guide together and dive deep into what is currently going on in your life.

If you think life coaching will work for you, visit my website at <http://www.theplanningwoman.com/life-coaching> to check out my current coaching packages. Mention that you have this guide to receive a 10% discount on current pricing.

And as always, I offer a 30-minute consulting call for free to determine if life coaching would work for you.