

# 30 Time Saving Tips

## Meal Planning

- Stock your produce drawer or a lower shelf in your refrigerator with snacks like carrot sticks and apple slices that your kids can grab without your help. Set up a similar area in your pantry with baggies full of dried fruit or graham crackers.
- Program the phone numbers for your favorite take-out restaurants into your cell phone so you can call to pick up dinner on the way home and avoid paying for delivery.
- Create a file for coupons for your favorite restaurants and file them with take-out menus. Put the coupons that expire soonest at the front of the pack.
- Set the table the night before and put items like bowls, utensils, cereal, fruit, toaster, and bread out to avoid a morning rush.
- Start a monthly meal exchange program with five friends and neighbors. Once a month, cook enough for five dinners. Stash one in the freezer and take the other to meet up with the group and swap healthy, freezer-ready main dishes. Then go home with four other meals, and put them in the freezer alongside the extra one you made for your family. Suddenly you're stocked up with a variety of easy, homemade dinners.
- Chop all your vegetables, fruits, and herbs for the week's meals at one time so everything will be ready for cooking.
- Choose meats or other proteins that can be used for several meals during a week. A store-bought rotisserie chicken can be shredded and used for several dishes, like chicken enchiladas, homemade chicken soup, and chicken salad. Slow-cooked pork tenderloin can double as barbecued pork sandwiches with just a bottle of barbecue sauce. Cooked beans can go in salad, tacos, and vegetable soup.



## Household Chores

- Assemble your children's outfits when you put clothes away in their drawers. Then you can quickly grab a full outfit without having to waste time scouring the drawers for a matching shirt and pair of pants.
- Skip ironing and get wrinkles out of a shirt or pair of trousers by putting them in the dryer for 15 minutes with a damp hand towel.

- Designate 30 minutes after dinner for cleaning — and get everyone involved in folding laundry, doing dishes, and clearing away clutter.
- Hire a babysitter for a couple of hours on the weekend so you can tackle household duties and errands without kids in tow.
- Keep disinfecting and glass wipes in the bathroom for quick cleanups around toilets, sinks, and mirrors. You could even do a speedy wipe-down while you bathe the kids.
- Forget sorting laundry. Wash everything in cold water.

## Shopping

- When you see a great toy on sale, buy several and sock them away for your child to give to friends at birthday parties throughout the year.
- Shop for holiday and birthday gifts year-round. Whenever you see a great gift for someone you love, buy it and set it aside for giving later.
- Do all of your errands one day a week, working off a list and taking the most efficient route.
- Grocery shop on the weekends or, if you don't want to waste precious weekend time, go to the store after the kids are in bed. You'll whiz through the store with much less frustration because you're not also feeling the pressure to get dinner on the table and everyone into bed on time.
- Order diapers and wipes online — no more lugging big boxes home from the store.

## Organizational

- Give your grade-schooler a "homework box" with pencils, an eraser, a stapler, a calculator, and a ruler. Ask her to bring it to the table whenever it's time to do homework.
- Stop wasting time looking for things you use often, like scissors, reading glasses, or baby wipes. Stock up and keep duplicates in the rooms where you spend the most time.
- Set up a box for bills that need to be paid and stock it with stamps and envelopes.
- Organize your favorite articles, parenting information, and recipes so you can find them more quickly. Place pages from online sites, magazines, and newspapers in page protectors and stash them in a three-ring binder.
- Sort belongings into clear, labeled bins that can be stacked and stowed so your child can easily find things like DVDs and toys without your help. Use brightly colored labels and picture labels for toddlers and preschoolers who can't read.
- Keep an assortment of greeting cards on hand, filed by occasion. You'll save time on trips to the store, and you can quickly take care of an unexpected birthday or send off a heartfelt condolence.
- Get rid of one bag of clothes, toys, and books for every bag that comes into the house. It means less stuff to clean up.

## Additional Tips

- Add important appointments and activities to a master calendar in your e-mail in-box and set up reminders for up to one week ahead. This calendar can be shared with family members via e-mail. (Google Calendar, a free Web-based system, even sends reminders to cell phones.)
- Open mail with the trash can nearby so junk mail and catalogs can be thrown out immediately.
- Turn your hangers backward at the beginning of every season. Anything left hanging on a hanger that's still turned backward at the end of the season hasn't been worn — give it away!
- Schedule your child's doctor's appointments for first thing in the morning when you're less likely to have a long wait.
- Write down or print out all-important phone numbers — for people like your child's doctor, the next-door neighbor, your veterinarian, and so on — and place the list in an inexpensive picture frame that you keep in your master bedroom or the kitchen. This way, you won't need to write out contact information for a sitter or grandparent — just point out the list, and they'll know who to call in case of emergency.



*Get organized and give yourself  
more time to relax.*