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## NF94-174 Time Management Suggestions For Getting Home/ Yard/Car Work Done

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## Time Management Suggestions For Getting Home/Yard/Car Work Done

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*by Kathy Prochaska-Cue, Extension Family Economics Specialist*

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While some home/yard/car work is enjoyable, a lot is mundane and routine. So a key to getting home work done is to have a system. Whether that system involves a detailed list or index card system or is as simple as lists of jobs to be done on Saturday, plan ahead and know how household work will be assigned to household members.

There are basically four ways household work is done:

1. **Do it yourself.** While it may make logical sense for the person who has the resources (time, skill, talent, knowledge) to do it, common sense says that if one person tries to do it all, overload will result. Another version of doing it yourself is practiced in households where each person is responsible for themselves (laundry, cleaning, meals, shopping, etc.) Of course, each situation will determine what is practical.
2. **Give the job away to other household members.** Keys to the successful giving away of a job include:
  - a. Teach the person how to do the job, including shortcuts.
  - b. Have the best tools, supplies, and equipment for doing the job.
  - c. Consider what household work a person already does.
  - d. Never re-do a job (unless health and/or safety is threatened). If you do, you'll get the job back.
  - e. Realize others may not meet your standards, but if you have truly given up the job, accept that your standards no longer apply.
  - f. Praise people; let them know their work is appreciated.
  - g. Don't demand help, but do expect it. As a household member, everyone who lives there has a responsibility for helping with work.
3. **Hire someone to do the job.** Pay a household member or someone outside the household to wash windows or clean the garage. Having a neighborhood teenager or cleaning service come in every

two weeks may be just what everyone needs to keep the home intact and operating.

4. **Don't do it.** Apply the motto "Less is Best," so you have fewer possessions to manage. Lower standards if health and/or safety are not threatened; if the carpet is not vacuumed each day or the living room not dusted each week, chances are no one will notice. Learn to live with comfortable clutter.

Now let's look at specific household work categories and time management tips to get work done.

**FOOD TIPS.** Develop and use a rotating menu system which can include complete meals or just main dishes. Photocopy a master shopping list so you just have to check off needed items. Buy and cook in quantity. Do only one large shopping trip each month for basics and staples. Prepare quick and easy but nutritious breakfasts only. Use food preparation and storage equipment to the maximum such as a slow cooker, freezer, microwave, food processor, and pressure saucepan. Prepare as much in advance as possible such as lunches the night before and quantity cooking on the weekends. Get everyone in the habit of rinsing dishes immediately after use.

**CLOTHING/LAUNDRY.** All family members above the age of three put away their own laundry. Multiple hampers or baskets coded for the type of washing machine settings such as "warm wash, cold rinse" or "cold wash, cold rinse" cuts sorting time. Locate laundry near the bathroom or the kitchen. Put away coats, boots, etc. as soon as possible when entering the house. Make it a house rule that what goes into the laundry basket inside out, gets washed and dried inside out — socks, underwear, T-shirts, etc.

**HOME/YARD/CAR CARE.** Set Friday night or Saturday morning as house cleaning time for everyone. Develop a flexible cleaning schedule so everything eventually gets done. All family members over the age of three are responsible for their own bedrooms. Use shelves instead of cabinets or drawers for storage; it's easier to put something away if you don't have to open a drawer or door. In each room have either all or no carpeting. Decorate with darker colors especially in high traffic areas.

Use quilts or sleeping bags for easier bed making. Wipe the bathroom sink after each use. Clean the tub or shower before you get out of it. Make the bed before you get up. Use throw rugs with rubber backs in heavy traffic areas. Change filters on the heating/cooling system frequently to cut down on the amount of house dust. Keep multiple sets of cleaning supplies and equipment especially if the house has more than one level. Simplify landscaping; consolidate several flower beds into a large one. Use low maintenance plantings. Keep lawn care equipment in top-notch working order. Schedule the next routine car service appointment each time you pick up the car left for servicing. Develop a car care calendar for routine service and seasonal maintenance.

**SHOPPING/MANAGEMENT.** Run several errands at the same time. Have a morning "launching pad" as a place to collect backpacks, briefcases, papers, money, etc. the night before. Carry a list of current sizes for everyone in the household when shopping. Do as much routine shopping (bedding, underwear, footwear, etc.) as possible by telephone or mail. Buy an entire season's clothing in one trip. Buy duplicates of gifts, cards, etc. Organize important papers and records in a filing system. Use "sticky notes" on the bathroom mirror or by the door to remind someone of something they tend to forget. Or use magnets to hold notes on metal surfaces.

**HOUSEHOLD MEMBER CARE.** When supervising baths or homework, dove-tail with other activities such as cleaning cabinets, checking supplies, mending, list making, ironing, washing dishes, or doing personal grooming. Group routine medical/dental/haircut appointments for household members. Find backup child care before you need it when the child or primary care giver is ill. Use a master

calendar to schedule chauffeuring of family members. Keep a medical record for family pets. Find a pet care alternative for those times when you are away before you need it.

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***A-7, Housekeeping Methods and Work Simplification***

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