

# organize today!

Ideas and tips to help you live  
an organized, simpler life at work and home

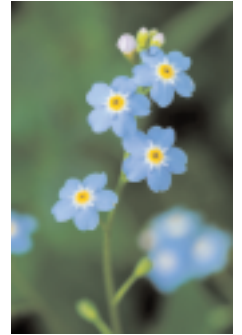
## Simplify Your Life

Wouldn't it be nice to slow down  
and have a little fun once in a while?

So many of us fill our calendars to  
capacity and don't take time to  
savor the simple — and often  
most enjoyable — things in life.

This issue of *Organize Today* will  
share tips to help you simplify your  
life and time. You'll learn the art of  
properly using a calendar to manage  
your tasks and explore making  
conscientious time management  
decisions that allow you to live your  
best life. You'll be on your way to a  
stress-free, deliberate, appreciate-  
every-moment lifestyle in no time!

## Slowing down, living deliberately



Rush, rush, rush. We hurry out of the house to get in our cars to zip along the freeway to our jobs. As we run errands on the way home, we tap our feet impatiently as the person in front of us takes too long. We hastily prepare dinner, eat in ten minutes flat, and get the dishes in the dishwasher. We hurry through the evening activities and fall into bed. We are so busy rushing through life that we forget to slow down to enjoy it! Take some time to reflect on the things that you usually rush through each day:

- Adopt a new attitude by deliberately choosing how you will spend your time.
- While it is important to schedule time to get things done, it is equally important to take time to simply appreciate life. Take a walk. Spend time talking (and really listening) to family and friends.
- Connect with nature by bringing nature inside: a window sill herb garden, fresh-cut flowers from your garden or farmers' market, a babbling fountain, a fresh breeze, or some nature music on CD.
- Expand your universe. Visit new places, like libraries, museums, and schools. Learn new things by listening to books on tape, attending workshops and seminars, or joining a book club. Share your thoughts and ideas with those you meet.
- Try to live in the current moment instead of always worrying about the future. Rejoice in the gifts you have and make the most of today. Accept that you and others around you are not perfect.

## Simple Web Sites

The concept of simple living is becoming more popular as life's hectic pace and the overabundance of material things clog our lives. The following web sites may inspire you to move toward a simpler lifestyle:

**Live Simple:** includes valuable techniques for simplifying your home, life, routine, and possessions.  
[www.december.com/simple/live](http://www.december.com/simple/live)

**Seeds of Simplicity:** designed to teach parents, educators, and children about the value of living simply.  
[www.seedsofsimplicity.org](http://www.seedsofsimplicity.org)

**Simple Living:** inspires and supports people who are interested in simplifying their lives.  
[www.simpleliving.com](http://www.simpleliving.com)

**Simple Living Network:** newsletter, calendar of events, resource list, chat rooms, and guide to living simply.  
[www.simpleliving.net](http://www.simpleliving.net)

**Simplicity Resource Guide:** extensive resource list for those looking to simplify their lives, including book reviews, tips, and articles. [www.gallagherpress.com/pierce](http://www.gallagherpress.com/pierce)

For your reading pleasure...

*Simple Pleasures* by Robert Taylor, Susannah Seton, and David Greer: Soothing suggestions and small comforts for living well year round.

*Seven Simple Steps to Unclutter Your Life* by Donna Smallin: Tips for enhancing physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

## Being your best time master

It is not enough if you are busy. The question is, "What are you busy about?"

— Henry David Thoreau



With our to-do lists ever-growing, assigning tasks to our calendars can be a simple way to manage time and reduce stress. The simple act of writing down the things we need to do releases us from having to remember it all "upstairs." Below are some tips to help you successfully manage your tasks and calendar.

- Be realistic about how long each task will take.
- Learn to say "no."
- Delegate: when you authorize others to take over some of your activities, you free yourself to focus on where you can make your best contribution.
- For those little things that take only a minute or two (such as putting your dirty dishes away or signing a permission slip), sometimes it's best to just do them right away.
- However, if the task will take 15 minutes or more, choose a specific time in which to do it. Schedule an appointment with yourself. You may need to communicate to your coworkers or family that you are unavailable due to scheduled work.
- Without a place to "assign" tasks, you'll always be in a reactive mode. Use your calendar diligently. Do things on your time, when you are ready. You are in command.
- Don't double-book yourself or plan your appointments too close together. Planning for delays will keep you calm and allow you to enjoy the current moment. Forget about multitasking for a while; simply enjoy the pleasures of each task you do.

# Selecting the right calendar for you

The first step to managing your time is setting up a great calendar system. For some, using a handy — and trendy — personal digital assistant (PDA) allows one to have a calendar, address book, and to-do list all in one. For others, a good old paper planner is a better fit. Deciding which is best for you depends on your lifestyle, your line of work, and your affection (or dislike) for technology. PDAs allow you to perform searches for information, easily group and rearrange data, and back up your information. And since they're so small and portable, they go where you go. PDAs are a great way to eliminate all those little scraps-of-paper reminders you carry with you.

Your other planner choices are:

- a wall or desk calendar or paper appointment book (like Day-Runner)
- a computer program (like Outlook, Act, or Lotus)

The important thing is that you need a single, consistent place where you record all your activities, appointments, and things to do. You have one life; you need one planner!

To help you choose the right type of planner, read on and decide if you are a visual/tactile person or a linear/digital person. Visual/tactile people might

prefer a wall or desk calendar or paper appointment book. Linear/digital people will most likely work best with a computer program or handheld electronic planner. (This information is excerpted from Julie Morgenstern's book, *Time Management from the Inside Out*.)

**Visual:** Your thinking flows freely when writing things out; you remember things better when you write them down; you like to flip back and forth between pages; you tend to remember where on a page you wrote things down; you enjoy storing old notebooks; you find computers cumbersome and time consuming.

**Linear:** Your thinking flows easily when typing; you are more likely to do a word search for a name or number than remember where you wrote it; you think in terms of sequence, priority, or chronology rather than in terms of association groupings; you feel at home at the computer; you are at your desk most of the day.

No matter which you choose, be sure to record every project, appointment, and task on your to-do list! This system will allow you to eliminate the paper reminders that accumulate on your desk, bulletin board, briefcase, etc.

# Keeping time with children

Children of all ages need routines and schedules, as well as downtime. Follow these simple tips to help life flow smoothly:

- Set out the breakfast dishes each evening so you have a few extra minutes to languish over breakfast treats and conversation with your family in the morning. Also, gather bookbags and double check that permission slips, sports equipment, and lunch money are ready to go. Lay out tomorrow's clothing to avoid hassles.
- Throughout the year, maintain routines for bedtime, mealtime, chores, etc. Allow some flexibility to take advantage of new opportunities as they arise.
- Slow down and unplug to enjoy and appreciate life. Turn off the TV and computer and head outside to take in the sights, sounds, and smells of nature. Set aside some special time — a weekend morning is great — to cuddle on the couch and talk about the week's events.

# Time- and space-saving tips for birthdays

Never forget another birthday! If you're frequently running to the store for last-minute birthday cards for friends, relatives, and coworkers, try this. Invest some time to write down all birthdates on your calendar. Then, take an unrushed trip to purchase birthday cards for the next 6-12 months, filing them in a simple accordion folder by month. At the beginning of each month, take note of the cards you need to send, address envelopes, affix stamps, and write greetings. You'll never waste another lunch hour hunting for almost-forgotten birthday cards.

Or, even easier, sign up with an online birthday reminder service, such as [www.birthdayalarm.com](http://www.birthdayalarm.com). It lets you store names and dates, and then e-mails you a personal reminder seven days and three days before each birthday! You can even send free cards from the site.

This year, consider making your own birthday gifts. We all have so much stuff. Giving a gift that "goes away," such as food, candles, tickets to a concert, a handmade gift certificate, or bath luxuries, is a great way to stop clutter from entering another household.

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## Homemade Herbal Bath Salts

Combine:

- 1 cup epsom salts
- 1 cup rock/sea salt (water softener salt works fine!)
- Few drops food coloring
- 20 drops fragrance or essential oil



Store in pretty canning jars, or even clean glass jars from store-bought salsa, pickles, etc.