

.....
Gain Control in 30 days (or less)
.....

simplify your time

stop running & start living!



MARCIA RAMSLAND

Author of *Simplify Your Life*

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Praise for *Simplify Your Time*

“Marcia Ramsland’s easy-to-read book will motivate you to create the time you need to live the life you want. With over twenty years of experience as a professional organizer, her eye-opening, time-saving tools and tips will give you the insight to *Simplify Your Time* and more!”

BARRY J. IZSAK

President, National Association of Professional Organizers

“Time is all we have. Here’s a way to maximize it and get great results.”

MARK VICTOR HANSEN

Co-creator, #1 *New York Times* Best-selling series *Chicken Soup for the Soul*®
Co-author, *Cracking the Millionaire Code* and *The One Minute Millionaire*

“No one ever said life is easy, but my friend and colleague Marcia Ramsland really makes it simple. Follow her advice and discover years of free time. I did!”

DR. DENIS WAITLEY

Author, *Timing is Everything*

“Who couldn’t use more time? Marcia’s book is like being given the gift of time! Thanks Marcia, I hope millions of women also get the gift of your book!”

PAM FARREL

Speaker and Author, *10 Best Decisions a Woman Can Make*

“I thought I knew a lot about time management until I read *Simplify Your Time*. Marcia Ramsland has challenged me to get off ‘the gerbil wheel of life’ and to start developing routines and systems that will make me more effective in my role as a wife, mother, and business owner. Every page is packed with stress-reducing and time-saving habits, tools, skills, and strategies that will make me more productive when I’m working, and free of guilt when I’m not. If you need more hours in your day, read this noteworthy book!”

CAROL KENT

Speaker and Author, *Becoming a Woman of Influence*

“Help! I want off the merry-go-round! My head is spinning, I’m going too fast, I’m not sure I can keep up!” If that’s your cry, Marcia’s book can help you live a more balanced life. You will find her short chapters very easy and quick to digest. A plus feature to the book is her 101 Time Saving Tips. A must-read for those who want to make sense of the maze of life.”

EMILIE BARNES

Speaker, Author, and Founder of *More Hours in My Day*

“I loved *Simplify Your Life*, Marcia’s first book. I was so impressed that I wrote her from my organized desk, ‘Now I’m ready for the next book.’ And here it is! Now we have time to get things done and live the life we want.”

JOANNE ROLLER, C.P.C.

Senior Recruiting Consultant

“After reading Marcia’s suggestions, I am motivated to manage my time. I never realized how much time we really *do* have control over.”

ANN LARSON

Tax Accountant and Author

“So much to do with so little time, or so I once thought! As a homemaker, mom, and with a part-time business at home, it’s overwhelming to have a full calendar and a huge pile of projects that never seem to get done. Marcia has changed all that with *Simplify Your Time*, teaching us to break it down into smaller opportunities to be accomplished so we are not facing a mountain of frustration—very needed.”

TINA DEARMONT

Homemaker and Former Executive Assistant

simplify
your time

simplify your time

stop running & start living!

MARCIA RAMSLAND,
THE ORGANIZING PRO



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SIMPLIFY YOUR TIME

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This book is dedicated . . .

to you, my busy friend,
in search of more time and a simpler lifestyle,

to my clients, who insist I teach them how to better manage their time
after I organize their offices and homes,

to Larry Nelson, a favorite client and friend, whose legacy reminds
me that you can live a full life of friends, productivity, and purpose
even if it is shortened by tragedy at age forty-seven,

and to my mother, Dorothy Rasmussen, age eighty-nine,
who outlived all our relatives
and reminds me that life can be satisfying at
every age and stage.

Life is a gift. Live it to its fullest by using your time well.

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A Word from the Author

Since you picked up this book, you are probably very busy and looking for more time in your life. (Or you really liked the cover.)

I told my publisher that people who need more time don't have time to read a book; they need answers right now! So after some brainstorming, we agreed that if we organized the book in short, digestible chapters that could be easily applied, it would be *invaluable*. That's what you have in your hands. Thirty short, practical chapters that will give you everything you need to learn the nuances of simplifying your time. You can read a chapter each day, or you can read an entire section in one sitting. The important thing is that you immediately start to apply what you are reading and build on those skills day after day.

When you think about it, everything happens in time: work projects, social events, travel and hobbies, crises and celebrations. We can simplify our time by evaluating our lives, learning new skills, and being intentional about where our time is going.

Studies have shown we have more than two hundred inputs a day—e-mail, mail, thoughts, decisions, memos, phone calls, and on and on the list goes. But our short-term memory only holds seven items at a time. This explains why we often feel overloaded. To clear your mind and simplify your time, you need to know the best habits, tools, shortcuts, and strategies of time management. And I promise to make this book interesting by including client and personal stories to illustrate just how you can apply them.

Be ready to learn and to be entertained. Consider me your “time coach” as we warm up on the racetrack of life. Let this be your personal time management

guide to help you relieve stress, find time for yourself, and create a lifestyle that supports you to get more done in less time.

Simplify Your Time: Stop Running and Start Living! is the practical application of the time management books you may have read and loved. From now on you'll know how to save time, spend time, capture time, and multiply your time to simplify your life. Let's get started!

Warmly,
Marcia Ramsland
The Organizing Pro

..... Day 1

Today *Is* the Time of Your Life



Being rich is having money;
being wealthy is having time.

—Margaret Bonnano

“Hi, honey. All 168 boxes are packed and ready to go.” I held the phone in one hand and a well worn to-do list in the other as I sank into a chair. I was relieved to tell my husband that all of our belongings and I would soon join him. David was already in California while I was closing things out at our home in upstate New York after our decision to move across the country for his new job. Our three teens would join us later that week.

As we talked, I suddenly noticed a gaping hole with only the prongs standing upright on my engagement ring. I gasped and almost dropped the phone. “Oh no! My diamond is missing! David, you won’t believe it. It’s gone!” At that moment, a million thoughts raced through my mind. Where did I lose it? The movers had just spent two days packing boxes which were ready to be picked up and delivered. I could just picture our three teenagers unpacking the boxes

at the other end and me distraught with agony, scolding them, “Be careful. My diamond could be in there.”

I knew I didn’t want to add any more tension than we already felt. So I took a deep breath and spoke to David in a calm voice. “OK. What do I do now? Was it insured?”

“No,” David said, “but don’t worry; just come. Everything is great here in California.”

“What?! It’s not insured?” I didn’t know whether to scream or cry. This was no ordinary gem. My husband had picked out the diamond especially for me when he was a college student traveling through Europe with his family.

Was That My Only Diamond?

That night I went to dinner with friends and their two sons, and I told them my dilemma. “We’ll go back and find it,” offered one of the boys. Their parents were eager to come too. However, there was one obstacle—no lights in the house. “No problem, we’ll bring flashlights,” they volunteered.

After dinner, the five of us went back to our empty home. In the darkness, we focused our flashlights on every step we took. “Where were you today?” my friend asked.

Time-Saving Tip #1

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If I have a clear mental picture of what I’m looking for, I can take steps to find it.

I remembered going up the attic steps, so we decided to start there. Carefully, we unfolded the stairs from the ceiling and creaked up one step at a time. Then down the stairs. Next we explored the bedroom . . . the family room . . . the kitchen . . . the living room. As we walked carefully through the last room, I began to lose hope of ever seeing my diamond again.

I paused to regain my thoughts and asked of no one in particular, “Now what would this diamond look like?” I glanced down at the carpet tweeds. “It would look like this,” I said as I spied something shiny like a piece of plastic wrap. When I picked it up, it held its shape. It was my diamond!

There it was—just sitting at the foot of the attic folding stairs. All five of

us had been up and down that stairway looking for it, yet we missed it. Thankfully, I now had a second chance to appreciate my treasure.

Time Management Lessons from My Diamond Hunt

I learned some lessons from that emotion-packed diamond hunt that relate to our topic of simplifying time:

LESSON #1: WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW WAS COSTLY. As a starry-eyed fiancée, I must have missed the instructions to regularly check the prongs holding the diamond. Regular maintenance would have saved me from a crisis at a critical moment in life.

In time management, there are some basic rules, tools, and skills you need to keep your life running smoothly too. Don't wait for a crisis to realize you missed some important steps. You'll learn them in this book.

LESSON #2: I TOOK IT FOR GRANTED. I was wearing my diamond every day but not really seeing it. I liked knowing it was there, but I didn't realize I needed to take better care of it.

Something similar can happen with time. We use time every day, but we don't realize it can get away from us if we don't manage it well.

LESSON #3: WHEN I KNEW WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR, I FOUND IT. I thought I knew what my diamond would look like, but I missed it several times. Until I focused on the gem's qualities of size, shape, and color, it remained lost to me.

To simplify your time, you need a clear picture of what you want to find, such as an hour a day to rest or read, an evening a week to meet with friends, or a weekend a month to focus on a hobby or to take a trip. Without attention to your personal goals, you'll never "find" the time to do these things.

It takes insight and new perspective to see what we have missed. In this book, I will give you both.

Time-Saving Tip #2

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Remember, time is on your side if you use it well. But it works against you if you bite off more than you can chew.

Your Time Is Simple; Your Life Is Not

If practice makes perfect, then we should be awesome time managers! After all, we have been using time every day of our lives. So why aren't we experts at using our time? Because life happens to us. Because we get fuzzy and unfocused. Because we get tired of the “have-tos” and prefer the “want-tos” but get trapped in the “never-get-around-tos.” And before we realize it, we run out of time.

Time-Saving Tip #3

You can add time to your life by deleting an activity that is unproductive. But you multiply your time when you add an activity that energizes you.

When you need more time, where do you go to get it? There are no ATMs or banks for time deposits or withdrawals. But there is something you can do: redistribute your commitments and spend time where you want to. You have 24 hours a day, 168 hours per week, and 8,736 hours per year. They contain all the time you need to achieve the hopes and dreams you were created for—one day at a time.

Simplify Your Time—How?

To simplify your time, you need to look at the key strategies used by successful time managers, people much like you. These strategies comprise four main categories, and I've chosen one focus per week. Under each category, we'll look at one key skill each day that you can immediately put into practice to simplify your time.

Each week, you'll save enough time to enjoy some extra downtime—whether for work, family, or fun. By the end of our thirty-day journey, you'll be ready to plan future goals and sail right through them. Here's the agenda ahead:

WEEK 1: PRACTICAL TIME-SAVING HABITS. From making your bed to handling your paperwork, good habits done quickly will save you lots of time and help your day run smoothly.

WEEK 2: PRACTICAL TIME-SAVING TOOLS. With the right tools, you'll be able to organize, simplify, maintain your time, and minimize stress as you respond to myriad daily challenges.

WEEK 3: PRACTICAL TIME-SAVING SKILLS. Once you have implemented time-saving habits and time tools, you'll want to learn the skills to "break the rules" and solve problems that arise.

WEEK 4: PRACTICAL TIME-SAVING STRATEGIES. Once your everyday life is working, you'll have time to look ahead and plan for future seasons, as well as create a plan for what to do when life brings challenges you didn't expect.

With thirty days of time-saving tips and systems, plus 100 time-saving tips tucked into the thirty chapters, you can begin having the time of your life. You will be more conscious of how you spend your time, who you spend it with, how you squander some of it, and how you wish to reorder it. In other words, you'll be in charge of your time instead of your time being in charge of you.

What Does It Mean to Simplify Your Time?

Simplifying your time involves managing yourself in regard to your available time to accomplish your goals at a reasonable pace. Once you start applying the principles in this book, you'll be able to simplify your time to stop running and start living.

With more time as your sought-after treasure, you can

- divide it;
- multiply it;
- supersize it;
- minimize it;
- evaluate it;
- delegate it;
- reassign it;

As we begin our journey to simplify your time, we are going on a hunt—for your "time" diamond. Time is the basis of all that you do and want to do. Let's find the time problems and time solutions that will simplify your life—starting today!

Decision Statement

I want to make my life better—and I believe the place to start is learning how to spend my time more effectively. I'm willing to go on a "diamond hunt" to find the solution to my time challenges for thirty days.

I want to simplify my life by simplifying my time. And I'm determined to make the necessary changes by taking this four week 30-day journey. After all, this *is* the time of my life!

Your Signature

Start Date

The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it.

—John Ruskin

Week 1

Time-Saving Habits to Simplify Your Daily Life



This week's time-saving habits will help you pinpoint ways you may be losing time each day—and how you can save more. Measure your current success against each of these chapters and start saving time by developing healthy daily habits.

WEEK 1
Time-Saving Habits to Simplify Your Daily Life

Day 2	Punch Up Your Punctuality
Day 3	Save Time with Two-Minute Pickups
Day 4	Get Off Your Computer and On with Your Life
Day 5	Power Through Your Paperwork
Day 6	Clean Up the Clutter
Day 7	Plan Tomorrow the Night Before
Day 8	Change a Habit, Change Your Life

..... Day 2

Punch Up Your Punctuality



Bad habits are really nothing more than the wrong decision made over and over. So always decide to be early.

—Diana DeLonzor

Ellen, a top-notch newspaper reporter, dashed into the restaurant brushing the snow off her coat, unwrapping her scarf, and clearing her fogged glasses. She looked like a Ferris wheel out of control as she caught herself from falling into the front counter. She shifted her purse and notebook in front of her and scanned the room.

When she spotted me, she hurried over and slid into the booth while her litany of excuses tumbled out. “I’m so sorry I’m late, Marcia. Just what I needed: to be late for an appointment with a professional organizer . . . to write an article on getting organized. This is the story of my life. I really want to find out how to change it. Maybe we’ll start there. By the way, thanks for coming.” She sighed. “And how are you today?”

I have to confess I was more like Ellen in my past than she knew. I battled

a lifelong habit of sliding into places just in time rather than on time or early. And I knew right where the problem began.

Five Sources of and Solutions to Chronic Lateness

Over the years, I discovered several sources of chronic lateness. I shared with Ellen that “on-time” people may view being late as a character flaw, but it is more complicated than that. The punctually challenged person may not know the source, yet identifying what is causing our lateness is the first step to finding the solution. Becoming aware can help us make the needed changes.

1. THE CAR RUNS OUT OF GAS AND YOUR WALLET IS EMPTY. Ellen ran into two problems on her way to the restaurant: she needed gas in her car and she didn’t have a dime in her pocket to pay for coffee. So she borrowed ten dollars from a coworker and ran the two blocks in the snow.

Time-saving solution: Plan a dependable schedule for banking and gas. Fill your gas tank on the weekend so the car is ready on Monday morning. Do your banking on a regular day at the end of the week.

2. YOU FORGET TO SUBTRACT TIME TO GET READY. If it’s 10:00 a.m. and you need to be at a luncheon at noon, how much time do you have to continue working? If your response is two hours, that may be the problem, because late people don’t subtract the time needed to get ready and drive to their destination. In Ellen’s case, twelve o’clock registered as the next event, and the arrival time became the departure time.

Time-saving solution: Use the “On your mark, get set, go!” principle. Just as a track coach shouts, “On your mark, get set, go!” so should you remind yourself to get ready. Subtract thirty minutes for closing your activities, gathering your things, and traveling. Plan only one and a half more hours of work and you’ll meet your goal of being on time at noon.

The “On Your Mark, Get Set, Go!” Principle

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- “On your mark”—This is the time to stop the activity you are doing, close your e-mail, and put things away.

- “Get set”—This is the transition time needed to think about what you’ll need for the next event, collect your things, and get ready to leave.
- “Go!”—This is the time to walk out the door and drive off so you’ll arrive early.

3. YOUR CLEANUP TENDENCY KICKS IN. While it is normal to clean up before you leave, this is not the time to go through your in-box, delete unnecessary e-mails, and label a file folder so you show up with a tidy set of papers in tow.

Time-saving solution: Write a “next actions” note. Jot a note before you leave, reminding yourself of your next steps. That will make it easy to resume your unfinished task when you return. Don’t sabotage arriving at your destination by perfecting your desk or your appearance. Allow five extra minutes for touch-ups. Then leave.

4. YOU THINK THAT “TRANSITION TIME” TAKES NO TIME. Another common problem is ignoring the time it takes to actually get out the door and to your destination. Allow yourself the few minutes you need to find a coupon, get your sunglasses, fill your briefcase, close the blinds, lock the doors, and make sure the dog is OK.

Time-saving solution: Set aside time for routine “out-the-door” tasks. These “out-the-door” transitional tasks are often the culprit that turns being on time to being late. Estimate how long they take, and add those minutes to the overall time needed. Practice your accuracy.

5. YOU DON’T OWN UP TO YOUR EMOTIONS. When you are fuming over being late, check your emotions. What are they telling you about this event? For example, perhaps you feel anxious when you’re around a certain person who asks too many questions, and you think you can avoid him or her if you arrive a few minutes late.

Time-saving solution: Acknowledge your emotions and work through them. If one person seems invasive with questions, plan a general answer such as, “Thanks for asking. Things are going well. How about you?” or “How are your kids?” Polite small talk will distract nosy people and fills in the time until the meeting starts.

How Do “On-Time” People Do It?

Did you know that “on-time” people think differently than late people? They do, and so can you. One high school band director, Warren Torn, had this advice for his six hundred players: “To be early is to be on time. To be on time is to be late. And to be late is unacceptable.” By following this simple rule, his band was nationally recognized for excellence.

Time-Saving Tip #4

Those who arrive early have more control over how an event will go than the person arriving late. Be punctual!

Tracy, a single working woman, says, “I go early to social events so I can catch up with my friends.” She always makes people feel glad they came because she is there early greeting them with her smile and peaceful demeanor.

Harry, a busy manager, makes it to work early every day. “I’d rather arrive early than having the stress of being late,” he says frankly. He sets the pace for his family by talking with each of his kids and getting out the door on time.

Ten Practical Tips for Being on Time

1. Always keep car keys, purse, and backpack on hooks and a shelf by the exit door.
2. Keep a clock in a prominent location so you can check it quickly when you have to leave your activities to be on time.
3. Clean out your purse or briefcase each evening so it’s ready to go the next morning.
4. Know how much money is in your wallet so you won’t run out of cash at an awkward time.
5. Check and fill your gas tank on a regular schedule, such as a quarter tank every Friday before the weekend prices go up.
6. Give up that “one last thing” before walking out the door to be on time.

Time-Saving Tip #5

Save yourself from one stressful hour this week by arriving five minutes early at a dozen different events.

7. Think about what you could do with an extra five minutes for every place where you arrived early. Consider it a bonus of an hour a week or more.
8. Put CDs you want to listen to in the car—an incentive to get your drive under way.
9. Review your plans and to-dos for the rest of the day and make note of things that have changed.
10. Arrive early and reward yourself for the stress you saved by enjoying a cup of coffee or briefly calling a friend.

You can simplify your time by dropping the stress of arriving late. Start living by enjoying the five minutes you gain from being early. You actually do more harm to yourself with stress and guilt by working up to the last possible moment than by preparing to leave with time to spare. As a bonus, people will respect you for being dependable, which is an admirable character trait that shows you respect yourself and others.

Being on time is a habit worth acquiring and practicing. Not only will it improve your life, but it will influence others to respond by being reliable as well. And not only would that cut our waiting time in half each day, each week, and each year, but we could all experience more free time at the end of the day!

Time-Saving Tip #6

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However early or late you arrive for your first event will set the pace for your day. Arrive early once, and repeat the pattern all day long.

It's Your Time

Punch Up Your Punctuality (Time Habit #1)

- Start a calendar to keep track of being “on time” for one particular event each day (e.g., arriving at work, leaving work, or eating dinner).
 - Aspire to be on time twenty-one times in a row, and then reward yourself for a making a new time habit.
 - Notice the benefits of being on time, and practice relaxing while doing so.
-

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then,
is not an act, but a habit.

—Aristotle

..... Day 3

Save Time with Two-Minute Pickups



One of the most valuable skills of time management is learning to use time fragments—the ten minutes waiting in line, the twenty minutes waiting for a meal, the thirty minutes riding somewhere, etc.

—Don Aslett

What do you do on days when you're especially rushed? If you're like most people, you double your speed, take shortcuts, and skim from one event to the next. But does it work?

Sometimes yes, but over the long term it creates more problems. Why? Because generally such actions leave a trail of unfinished tasks lingering behind you, including to-dos to follow up on, half-opened mail, and a dozen "quick" e-mails and voice messages to return, all of which nibble at your peace of mind.

Time-Saving Tip #7

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Two-minute pickups are tasks that are too short to write on a to-do list but that slow the pace of your life when they are ignored too long.

Is there a solution? Yes, if you regularly practice the time-saving habit of using two-minute pickups to clean up and bring closure to a task. Perfect them, and you will simplify your time at home, at work, and on the run.

A Two-Minute Pickup Becomes a Two-Minute Solution

Ron pushed through the crowd at the end of one of my sessions on organizing time. “Well, Marcia,” he began, “you’ve done it. You’ve motivated me to do something my mother and my ex-wife have spent twenty years in vain trying to get me to do.”

“What could that possibly be?”

“Make my bed every day. When you said, ‘Make your bed and make your day,’ I wondered if you were for real. But when you said it only takes ninety seconds to pull up the covers on one side, then the other, and plop the pillows on, I thought, *I could do that!* And you said it makes 50 to 70 percent of the room look neat and clean for sixteen hours of the day. That makes sense. I have to make the bed at night anyway before I get back in it.”

I chuckled. Such a little thing was a big deal for Ron. His two-minute pickup became a two-minute solution for a relational problem he didn’t even know he had.

Ron found that once he mastered one two-minute pickup, he looked for more two-minute solutions. He began at home and reported to me a couple of weeks later that the place was looking pretty “shipshape.”

When I saw him next, he had a fresh haircut and looked sharp. He had found the time to take care of himself and started to be more positive. The routine of making his bed every day started the momentum to get the rest of his life in order—in two-minute segments.

Time-Saving Tip #8

A two-minute solution for a recurring task saves ten minutes every time thereafter. You could save five hours a month or sixty hours in one year for a short two-minute investment.

Save Time at Home

Here are some two-minute solutions to help you save time at home:

- Load the dishwasher.
- Water a plant.
- Renew a prescription.
- Pay a bill.
- Program a cell phone number.
- RSVP.
- Fold the laundry.

Do a few of these each day, and you just may save enough time to sit down for a cup of coffee and watch the sun set!

Save Time at Work

My client Melinda had control of her time at home, but she was always rushed at work. “I consistently misplace my agenda for our staff meetings—and I lead them!” Melinda agonized. “I waste time looking for last week’s agenda so I can use it to write a new one and then make copies for everyone. Why can’t they hire an assistant to do that for me? I should be doing more important things.”

Melinda was under the false assumption that because of her “big” title, small tasks shouldn’t be her responsibility. In a way that was true, but writing the agenda and leading the meeting were part of her leadership role.

I wanted to be kind but firm in my response. “Time to take another look at this situation, OK? Be realistic. It’s unprofessional and unfair to expect an assistant to do for you what you can and should do for yourself. No one can read your mind. By taking charge, you also reap the benefits. Things will get done your way. What have you tried so far?”

Melinda admitted, “I tried a notebook, but then I misplaced it. I failed at filing because I hate to file. But I’d better do something—fast. My boss is

Time-Saving Tip #9

If it only takes two minutes to complete a simple task, continue this practice twenty-one times and you will develop a habit you can depend on.

expecting a report on the steps I've taken to finish our team project.”

In our discussion, Melinda narrowed the solution to two choices: either she could get a new file to store her previous agendas (a colored one clearly labeled to help her spot it quickly), or she could keep a paper punch on her credenza. When needed, all she had to do was spin around and punch the pages before snapping them into her three-ring binder. With either solution, she could make a second copy of the previous week's agenda to place in a two-pocket folder for safekeeping.

“I like the idea of walking into the meeting with a binder and being able to refer to past meetings,” she decided. “I can pick up a three-hole punch in the supply room. Why didn't I think of that?”

At work, there are many two-minute pickups that will save you time and energy. Consider the following:

- Reply to and close any open e-mail.
- File the paperwork on your desk.
- Replace an old file folder.
- Label a binder.
- Pick up a fax and file it.
- Prioritize your in-box.
- Check off your completed to-do list items.

Put a few of these to work, and you'll feel more energetic and in control at the end of the day.

Moving Ahead

You might be wondering what became of Melinda. I have good news. She started labeling and filing the mess of papers on her desk, one set each day. In

less than a month, her desktop was clear, and she had regained confidence and control.

The next time we met, I asked her how she was doing. She laughed with relief. “When I realized what a time-saver my meeting binder was, I decided to apply the same strategy to other areas. Now my projects, my expense reports, basically everything on my desk is in order and easy to find.”

As two-minute pickups become part of your daily routine, you, too, will experience wonderful benefits at home and at work. You’ll be more relaxed, orderly, and efficient.

Practice sensing how long two minutes are by heating a cup of tea in your microwave for two minutes and seeing what you can do in that time. Soon it will be part of your time-saving routine. And then you can sit and enjoy your tea.

Time-Saving Tip #10

How much time will I save
with a new habit?

Time Spent: 2 minutes x
21 days = 42 minutes setting
up a solution

Time Saved: 10 minutes x
21 days = 3.5 hours of stress-
free rewards

Like Interest on a Loan, Time Compounds Every Day

When you think about it, if you spend two minutes bringing one item to closure, you will save at least ten minutes to use in some other way. Compounded over longer periods of time, this really adds up.

You can work your way out of stressful situations by investing two minutes several times a day on a consistent basis. Reap the reward at the end of each month with more solutions to problems that once drained your energy. Make two-minute pickups a part of your lifestyle, and by the end of the year you’ll have saved hundreds of hours that you can use to relax, work on your hobby, play golf, or take a class.

So what are you waiting for? Start now. Simplify your time by picking up the pace in every area of your life. Ask yourself all day long, “What can I do with two minutes?” And then do it!

It's Your Time

Save Time with Two-Minute Pickups (Time Habit #2)

- Learn *not* to put things down but to put them away all day to simplify your life.
 - Practice the two-minute pickup before you leave a room or work area.
 - Learn to decide it, do it, schedule it, sign it, end it, or send it in two minutes all day long.
-

Nothing is beneath you if it is in the direction of your life.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

..... Day 4

Get Off Your Computer and On with Your Life



Think about it: E-mail is really nothing but a bunch of interruptions and distractions that appear in your in box without an invitation. Even checking your e-mail for a minute is a surefire way to . . . distract your mind with a zillion other issues. Once that happens, prolonged concentration on anything, critical or not, is nearly impossible.

—Julie Morgenstern

Kay sighed and turned out the light at her desk—not at the office but at home. Everyone else in the family had gone to bed long ago. Lately she had been the last one shutting down her computer, locking the doors, and turning out the lights.

Kay shared this dilemma with me when we met at one of my seminars. She leaned forward, eager to vent her frustration. “I can’t keep up with my e-mail no matter how determined I am not to let it control my time,” she said. “I even turn on my computer first thing in the morning to get a head start. I’ve got to get back to my life! What can I do?”

Millions of men and women have the same problem. What began as a convenience has become a compulsion. Following are some ideas I offered Kay. I hope they will work for you too.

You Conquered Junk Mail, Now Conquer E-mail

It wasn't long ago that junk mail made up most of our clutter. The average household, for example, receives fifteen pieces of mail each day. You can shred the junk mail, file the important bills and papers, and distribute the rest until all are in their rightful places, or you can let them clutter up your counter or desk. E-mail is much the same way. You need to decide how to get rid of the junk e-mail, handle the important items, and dispense with the medium priorities so they don't clutter up your in-box.

Time-Saving Tip #11

Schedule e-mail sessions at regular times, such as 10:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., and 5:00 p.m. Plan to spend twenty minutes each time or one hour a day. If that's not enough, decide how much is and stick to it.

So why is e-mail so difficult? That's a good question. It's difficult because we are relational and emotional beings. And just as curiosity killed the proverbial cat, we are drawn to check our e-mail "one more time." We could just get up and walk away, but we don't. Messages arrive quickly, and we want to find out what they're about, who sent them, and what we need to respond to. We remain expectant all day long—sometimes for as much as sixteen hours. Then we wonder why we didn't accomplish any of our priorities.

Is Your Computer Controlling Your Life?

Only you can answer that question. Whether you turn on your computer for work, for personal correspondence, or as a first response to walking into your office or computer room, there is a better way to live.

If you get up from your computer session with a brain fog or irritated that your life is slower than the speed of your computer, it's time to slow down.

Your E-mail In-Box

How many e-mails do you receive each day? According to a survey of 2,447 adults conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, there are two kinds of e-mailers: the “average user” and the “power user.” Following are the results of this survey:

	Incoming E-mails	Sent	Time
Average User	20	5	30 minutes
Power User	50+	20+	90 minutes
Your Statistics			

Five Ways to Get Off E-mail

Kay considered herself an average user, but she still found it difficult to get off her computer. Here are five ways that could be helpful to Kay and perhaps to you, if your e-mail habits are escalating out of control.

1. NEVER CHECK E-MAIL IN THE MORNING. According to Julie Morgenstern, author of a book by that same title, you will be more productive if you spend the first hour of the day on concentrated work items apart from e-mail. Then when time's up, turn on the e-mail and begin.

2. IMPROVE YOUR SORTING METHOD. Systematically deal with e-mail each day. Don't skip around.

- Send junk e-mail to the “blocked senders” list.
- Respond to key people and projects.
- Start at the top and respond to messages that require two minutes or less.
- Place reminders in folders by person or project.
- Follow up on longer responses the next time you open your e-mail.

3. CREATE FOLDERS WITH TIME LIMITS. Deal with your e-mail folders on a regular basis.

- Delete File—Empty on Fridays at the end of the day.
- Temporary File—Empty on Friday after using this file as a temporary holding place for the week.
- Read File—Read midafternoon for a workday break.
- Important File—Hold these for a longer term and review at the end of the month.

Time-Saving Tip #12

Send regular distribution news e-mails the same time and same day each week. People will appreciate your regularity.

4. TITLE YOUR E-MAILS ACCURATELY. Don't waste people's time by hitting Reply before you relabel the subject line. Instead, pride yourself on accuracy and write a short title of what is to follow: "Project Due Tues. Noon" or "Hi, Mom, What's for Dinner?"

5. TIME IT, TRACK IT, FINE-TUNE IT. One day, jot down each time you check your e-mail. You may find that you impulsively hit Send/Receive more often than necessary. Next, track it for three days and fine-tune your times until e-mail is just a part of your day, not your whole day.

Tips from Power Users

Thousands of people have mastered the use of their computers, and you can too. Pay attention to the men and women you know who accomplish the most in life. What kind of e-mails do they send? Check their efficiency, clarity, and brevity. Follow their example. Why not learn and imitate the best of what comes across your screen?

Here are some of the key strategies and habits of "power users":

- Their answers are brief.
- They get right to the point.
- They are known for quick responses.

- They provide pertinent information.
- They do not waste time sending forwards.
- They keep a file of stock answers for FAQs (frequently asked questions).

What Will I Do When I Get Off My Computer?

It sounds like a funny question, but unless you plan what you'll do when you finally shut down your computer, you'll linger and check for more e-mail, research your project longer, or continue to browse and waste more time.

Instead, set a timer to get yourself up, go for a walk, pull away for a brief rest, and eat regularly scheduled meals. Set boundaries with coworkers and with yourself so you will leave work on time. Go to the gym a few times a week to avoid carpal tunnel syndrome and back and neck pain. These actions will also keep you from wearing the letters off your keyboard!

Only you can decide when too much is too much. If you are serious about curbing your hours at the computer, you'll need a plan to keep yourself motivated. Otherwise, you'll be drawn back like a magnet to steel. Precious time wasted in front of a computer may turn out to be the primary hindrance to getting on with your life.

Time-Saving Tip #13

Be proactive in averting junk e-mail by not just deleting it but instead sending it to a "blocked senders" list that will delete and block future e-mails from this source.

Simplify Your Time and Get On with Your Life

Isn't it interesting that when computers first came on the scene, most of us were afraid of pushing a key or button that could result in a crash? Now the pendulum has swung the other way. We're afraid (or at least resistant) of pushing the Off button so we can get on with the rest of our lives.

If the computer has become your life—stop. Pull away from your monitor, close the door, and do something you enjoy away from the screen and keyboard.

It's Your Time

Get Off Your Computer and On with Your Life (Time Habit #3)

- What is your personal red flag that you have been on the computer too long (e.g., resenting others who work fewer hours, feeling mentally stressed when I get off, etc.)?
 - Track your computer hours for today (or one week) to discover your actual time.
 - What would you like to be doing instead of being on the computer?
-

It is not how many e-mails you get. It is how many you let “hang around”! Your “In Box” is not a filing cabinet, a to-do list, a calendar, an address book, or a bookmark list.

Although you have limited control over the number of e-mails you get, you have total control over the number you leave in your “In Box.” . . . Keep your In Box empty!”

—Barbara Hemphill

..... Day 5

Power Through Your Paperwork



Up to 70 percent of a magazine is advertisements and they are updated every month, so you don't need to keep them. . . . If there happens to be an article you want to read or save, tear it out and read or file it, and throw the rest away.

—Don Aslett

“Your daughter is on the phone,” Danielle’s secretary announced over the intercom. Danielle ended her conversation with her boss and took the call.

“Mom,” her nine-year-old daughter Gabrielle started, sniffing at the other end, “my class is going to the planetarium today, but the teacher won’t let me go without my permission slip. Did you forget to sign it?”

Danielle sighed. Yes, she meant to sign and return it right away, but she must have gotten distracted. It was sitting in the pile of papers on the kitchen counter— or was it by the computer? “Let me talk with your teacher,” said Danielle.

Gabrielle turned the phone over to Mrs. Dartmouth, but before Danielle could begin, the teacher broke in. “Mrs. Jones, this is the third time you’ve

Time-Saving Tip #14

Allow twenty minutes to process (read, file and do) the daily mail. Or plan two hours on the weekend to catch up.

missed a permission slip deadline. I'm sorry, but it's too late now. The bus is filled. Please pick up Gabrielle at the office."

Danielle felt reprimanded as she left work. She realized it was her fault, one more in a long string of mishaps. Her boss was irritated because two weeks ago she took off to get her son's passport notarized for his trip to Europe—the day it was due.

Those two paperwork problems took two mornings to unravel, but there was another one that kept her awake at night. Danielle explained it to me on the phone. "I turned in my taxes really late this year," she stated. "But I've got to

have that refund check this week or borrow money, which I can't afford. Why does everything depend on paperwork?"

Paper, Paper, Everywhere

If it's true that people spend twenty minutes a day looking for things, it's likely that fifteen minutes of that time is spent searching for a missing paper. Danielle lost two mornings of work taking care of her kids' paperwork, several weeks of sleepless nights waiting for her refund check, and frequent moments of disrespect from her boss, a teacher, and her children. It was getting costly.

Here's what Danielle needed to know to turn things around and put things in place.

Clean Up the Mail Pile Every Day

The average household receives fifteen pieces of mail a day. Five of those are junk mail and can be tossed immediately. Likely, five more are bills or important papers you can file appropriately. And the other five, which I call the "dangling five," start a paper pile on the kitchen counter.

In a year of five extra papers a day on the counter, fifteen hundred to eighteen hundred pieces of paper, or fifteen to eighteen inches of paperwork, pile up and send you scrambling to find the one paper you need when you need it. That's no longer necessary if you establish a workable plan to handle your mail.

Set Up a Personal Organizing Center

Danielle and I set up a Personal Organizing Center (POC) in the kitchen right near her monthly calendar and telephone. The two feet of counter space became the sole spot to open mail and handle the day's papers.

All the daily papers landed there. In a drawer she kept a small black office tray divider with a working pen and pencil, two sizes of paper clips, stamps, Post-it notes, and highlighters for reading newsletters quickly. "This is neat," Danielle exclaimed. "Everything I need to do my paperwork is available. But what do I do with the paper?"

Five File Folders Save the Day

I explained to Danielle how five file folders could help her keep track of papers.

FOLDER #1—Calendar. This holds any paper that relates to an event on your calendar. No more refrigerator clutter.

FOLDER #2—To Do. If an item takes five minutes or less, then do it right now. If longer, write it on a master to-do list you keep visible. Write the tasks on the three days you can most control—today, tomorrow, and the day after. Beyond that, you never know when you'll have time to do them.

FOLDER #3—To Decide. This file contained everything Danielle was thinking about doing but wasn't yet ready to do. It cleared a lot of paperwork off the countertop.

FOLDER #4—Information. This file held carpool lists, the neighborhood calling tree, and the soccer schedule to retrieve at a moment's notice.

FOLDER #5—My Interests. Here Danielle dropped in a free fitness center coupon, a decorator's advertisement, and a phone number for a landscaper. When she had time, she would turn to this file and decide which things she was ready to attend to.

Time-Saving Tip #15

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Spend five minutes labeling the five folders to save you five minutes every time you need to locate a paper.

A Place for Everything and Every Paper in Its Place

We sorted the rest of the papers and decided where to store them and how long to keep them.

Paper	Where to Keep It?	How Long?
Morning newspaper	Coffee table	Until noon
School newsletter	File #4 —Information	Until the next one comes out
Children’s finished papers—save the best, toss the rest	A three-ring binder “Memory Book”	End of school year or permanently in binder
Bills to pay	Small desk drawer	Pay online or by hand the fifth of the month.
Utility bills	File folder in desk	Until balanced since last bill
Mortgage payments	File folder in desk	Seven years for tax records
Magazines	A magazine holder or coffee table	New one in, old one out, even if you have to read it on the spot.
Newsletters	Read it with the day’s mail or file by organization.	New one in, old one out. There is no “later” to read.
Bulletins	File #1—Calendar	New one in, old one out.
A good article	File #5—Personal	Date it with the day/month/year and source.
Coupons	Coupon holder	Keep only items you use.
A new recipe	Recipe file	Date, file, and save under “To Try” for three months.

Danielle was getting more and more excited as she put each paper in a file folder, the magazine holder, or the recycle bin. “There is a place for everything, isn’t there?”

“Yes, and if there isn’t, you can create a system holder for it. When everything gets filed each day,” I reminded her, “either once a day when the mail comes in or before leaving work, your retrieval time savings multiplies without piles to wade through.”

Customize Your Files or Binders

Danielle and her children created a two-pocket folder—green for Gabrielle and blue for Keith—with the right pocket designated for the work that came home from school and the left pocket for completed homework and papers to return to school.

Each night after dinner, the kids went through their folders while Danielle finished kitchen cleanup. She stopped filling in forms they could handle without help, such as name, address, and phone number, and only filled out the ones that required her signature or had information specifically for a parent.

Danielle charged them one dollar for any extra trips she had to make to school or for papers signed the day they were due. Gabrielle and Keith quickly became responsible.

On-Time Paperwork Saves You Time and Money

Danielle felt a burden lift as she found another permission slip due the next day, a sizable missing check to cash, and her best friend’s birthday card. “This is exciting!” she declared. “I’m going to be on time with my paperwork, and I will pay bills online each month. I never thought of late paperwork as lost time or money.

Time-Saving Tip #16

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Act on any paper-related item that takes five minutes or less. Place the others on a master list and do them on the three days you can most control—today, tomorrow, and the next day.

Time-Saving Tip #17

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Every paper problem has a solution. Ask, “What is the next action I need to take with this paper?” Then trim the FAT: File, Act, or Toss.

“Keeping up on my paperwork each day is the best time-saver of all. I can read my magazines and not worry about what I might have missed doing. I can do this!”

It's Your Time

Power Through Your Paperwork (Time Habit #4)

To set up a Personal Organizing Center, do the following:

- Create five file folders.
 - Keep paperwork supplies handy.
 - Designate a bin for shredding and recycling.
 - Go through your paperwork until your desk or counter is clean.
-

Remember that today's mail is tomorrow's pile. Take today's mail to your paper-management center and begin now to develop your own paper-management system.

—Barbara Hemphill

..... Day 6

Clean Up the Clutter



Don't let the fear of the time it will take to accomplish something stand in the way of your doing it. The time will pass anyway; we might just as well put that passing time to the best possible use.

—Earl Nightingale

“Who wants to go out for ice cream?” my husband asked on a Sunday summer evening. Our three children immediately responded, “Meeeeeeeeeeee!!!”

I chuckled at their enthusiasm despite the long day we'd had, including the hassle of breakfast, church, lunch, and dinner with young children. As a matter of fact, I relaxed a little myself all day and left the dishes in the kitchen sink. But as I thought about time out for ice cream, I spied the sink full of dishes I had left from the day.

“David, why don't you take the kids, and I'll clean up and enjoy a little time for myself?” My husband nodded, knowing it would give me a break. I thought I'd spend about half an hour on the dishes and then read a magazine or relax a bit before the busy week ahead.

As I washed dishes, I thought about how this simple task used to take all

Time-Saving Tip #18

Save time each day by putting away clutter such as clothing, bags, and backpacks as it comes in rather than waiting till the weekend.

evening. With no plan and lots of interruptions, it became a never-ending process. At least now I had shortened it to ten minutes after every meal. *So three meals today should only take thirty minutes*, I told myself. I started the dishwasher, cleaned the pans, wiped down the counters, and swept the floor. When I sat down and glanced at the clock, I was surprised. It had taken me an hour and a half!

My rest was short-lived as the family came piling in a few minutes later. I missed my entire break time—over what? A day's worth of dishes. How disappointing to miss ice cream *and* peace and quiet.

At that moment I suddenly saw what I had not seen before, and a time principle was forever etched in my mind. *Maintenance is always more effective and efficient than a big cleanup*. What should have taken thirty minutes took three times as long! That's a real time waster.

You, too, can save time by putting away household clutter of dishes, laundry, and paperwork as you go. Here are three systems to streamline cleaning up the clutter at home.

Quick Cleanups Save Time

It takes only one step to put an item away immediately after using it. But it takes two steps to use an item and set it down before putting it back later. Here are some examples of short cleanups:

- Hang up your coat when you take it off instead of dropping it on the couch.
- Put your bags, mail, and briefcase away when you walk through the door instead of dropping them on a counter.
- Put your paperwork away when you're finished instead of leaving it out.

A Quick Pickup Each Morning and Evening Saves Time

I'm always looking for faster ways to save time and keep a nice-looking home. The best way I've found is to notice which efforts keep my personal space in order with the least amount of effort.

System #1: Morning Cleanup Routine
1. Make the beds: 2 minutes each
2. Pick up the bathrooms: 5 minutes
3. Clean up the kitchen: 15 minutes

When I asked an audience of preschool mothers what happens after the morning routine of making beds, picking up the bathrooms, and cleaning up the kitchen, one mom with a newborn and two toddlers raised her hand and answered, "Lunch?"

After the audience had a good chuckle, I reassured her the three hours of household chores between nine and twelve would shorten to thirty minutes or less once the children were older and able to do more things for themselves. Good routines improve as you practice getting better results, all with an eye to creating your own time-saving shortcuts.

System #2: Evening Cleanup Routine
1. Complete the mail: 15 minutes
2. Put away laundry: 10 minutes
3. Pick up clutter: 10 minutes

When you pick up clutter and put away personal and household items each day, you follow the same principle I learned when I missed my ice cream outing: maintenance takes two-thirds less time than a big cleanup.

A Time-Saving Weekly Schedule

Save yourself additional time by planning the tasks you have to do each week to keep your life running smoothly. These might include banking, errands, filing, emptying wastebaskets, and completing projects. Sometimes it feels like more than we can handle. But when you put the tasks on paper, they become less daunting.

System #3: The Weekly Cleaning Routine Weekly Cleaning Strategic Tasks
1. Empty trash cans.
2. Change bed linens.
3. Vacuum traffic areas.
4. Mop or sweep the kitchen and bathroom floors.
5. Eliminate an annoying pile.
6. Complete a project from your project list.
7. Include banking, fueling your car, and shopping in your weekly plan.

Don't Just Think About It—Take Action!

Time-Saving Tip #19

Pick up items each morning and evening and save two-thirds the time it takes to do a major cleanup on the weekend.

Making a list is a great idea, but your chance of finishing the tasks on that list will be reduced by 50 percent unless you link it to your calendar or other time management system. For the most productive use of your time, assign a task to a particular day of the week and stick to it.

Save time and eliminate worry and stress by doing the same tasks on the same day each week. Your schedule will then “decide” for you the “when” and “what.” Just do it and be done.

Visible and Invisible Clutter

There are two kinds of clutter: visible and invisible. The visible clutter sits out on your countertops, desk, and tables, while the invisible clutter is hidden behind closed cabinets, closets, and drawers. Both kinds can slow you down and sap your mental and emotional energy.

For instance, if you have clutter on your countertops, and you spend five minutes a day looking for an item, that's 30.4 hours a year spent looking for something in a drawer or paper pile. Think about it. You could have an extra three days each year to use in a more enjoyable way if you just put things away. What great motivation to clean up the clutter!

Find a “Giveaway” Spot and Fill It

What if you want to get rid of something in order to simplify your life? It would waste time to drive to Salvation Army only to deliver one extra curling iron. So what can you do?

Save time by designating a “giveaway” spot in your garage or closet with neatly marked boxes, such as the following:

- giveaway clothes
- giveaway stuff (items other than clothing)
- giveaway media (books, CDs, and DVDs)

You can choose whether to give these items away to a charity or needy family, or you could sell them in a garage sale. One time I sold several boxes of items at a friend's garage sale over the course of two weekends. With the earned income we bought a new light fixture for our foyer. But more important, I saved a total of 12.5 hours for the year by not spending five minutes per item to clean, sort, or store the things we sold or gave away. That's time saved and freedom gained.

Time-Saving Tip #20

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One of the fastest ways to save time is to do the same thing at the same time every week. Soon it will be a habit—the kind that works in your favor.

Time-Saving Tip #21

Schedule quarterly charity pickups on your calendar to keep down the clutter you have to put away. Clean out closets in the fall and spring to contribute unused clothing.

One of my class participants, Jan Hickerson, a Realtor, was getting ready to move. She shared how she collected all the unopened tools and products her husband hadn't used and, with his permission, returned them to Home Depot. She proudly displayed the credit slip for \$276 and enjoyed the cleared space.

A friend of mine interviewed a cleaning lady who refused to work for her unless she put away some of the many collectibles she had on display. Chris learned something from the experience. "I never realized how much clutter these items added to our living space. Marcia, you'd be proud of me. My home is now uncluttered and easier to keep in order—and I have saved a great deal of cleaning time each week."

It's Your Time

Clean Up the Clutter (Time Habit #5)

- Commit to cleaning one stressful area regularly (e.g., kitchen papers or laundry).
 - Find “homes” for homeless items that pile up.
 - Put away clutter every day until your counters and floors are clean and clutter free.
-

Creating open space is a two-step process. First, clear clutter from all flat surfaces one at a time. That includes the desktop, counter, table, shelf, windowsill, floor, and any other surfaces. After you have cleared all the flat surfaces, then you begin to delve into the inner spaces: drawers, cupboards, closets.

—Porter Knight

Plan Tomorrow the Night Before



Tomorrow we will become what we choose today.

—John Maxwell

I was chatting with a women’s director when one of her ladies joined us. “Excuse me, Stephanie, I just wanted to let you know that I won’t be able to come to lunch today. It’s been such a busy week—extra time at school, my son got sick, and I’m behind at home—that I haven’t had time to spend time with my mother, and her birthday was last weekend. So I need to be with her. Let me know when you have it next time. I’ll be sure to come.”

As the woman walked away, Stephanie looked stunned. “Can you believe that? The hostess has a gorgeous home and planned a luxurious luncheon at her own expense so we could meet together. We only had six women coming, and this lady tells me she can’t come the hour before? Why couldn’t she at least have called yesterday? That’s just inconsiderate. Grr!”

When you simplify your time, one of the most considerate steps you can take is to plan tomorrow the night before. This saves yourself and other people time. And it keeps you in everyone’s good graces.

Set Up Tomorrow for Success

Anyone can develop the habit of preparing for tomorrow the night before. You're set up for a good day when you have items placed in a regular "launching spot" and appointments confirmed as soon as possible.

My husband saves time by neatly zipping up his computer case with his papers inside at the foot of the stairs at night. He has a mental checklist of items laid out on his dresser to take: his watch, his work badge, and his favorite pen. He has never had a bad day because of a forgotten necessity.

I began the practice of calling clients the day before our meeting to find out the top three to five issues they wanted to cover, to answer questions and confirm the time, and to find out whether I should dress for organizing their garage or their paperwork. It relieved their fears and gave us a fast start when we got together.

Lucy, a busy executive, liked to have our daughter babysit overnight while she was on business but often missed getting Lisa because of waiting until the week of her travels to call. When Lucy learned to call immediately when a trip came up, she got her dependable sitter almost 100 percent of the time.

Time-Saving Tip #22

With so much to do every day, you can actually spend time getting more things done while spending less time doing them—if you plan tomorrow the night before.

Does Planning Take Time or Save Time?

Those who plan tomorrow the night before have learned it takes just a few minutes once they consistently practice the habit. Now they are no longer surprised that someone doesn't show up for lunch because they had it on the wrong week or they missed jury duty because they forgot.

At work, there are numerous ways to plan tomorrow the night before. Consider the following:

- Confirm tomorrow's appointments.
- E-mail your group, reminding participants of the meeting time, location, and agenda.

- Print all directions for sales calls, and confirm with the client the time and topics.
- Go through your in-box and list important items and time frames in which you'll handle them.
- Check with support staff on the status of project steps.
- Confirm due dates with team members.

At home, there are numerous ways to plan tomorrow the night before. Consider the following:

- Prepare your grocery list.
- Find your receipt to return an item.
- Pull together the dry cleaning to drop off.
- Schedule an online package pickup with your mail carrier.
- Get your old watch battery ready so you purchase the correct size.
- Call to confirm your babysitter.

The Rewards of Planning Ahead

The bonus for planning ahead is a successful day, meeting people on time instead of showing up to a locked door of someone who forgot an appointment with you. Errands get done when you gather materials the night before, so your clocks get fixed, lightbulbs get replaced, and you can stay home for the rest of the evening.

Driving Down the Highway of Life Management Skills

I learned to apply this time-saving principle to driving to new places. As helpful as an accurate set of directions is, I always focused on the next turn. But when I got off the freeway, I didn't know which way to turn without scrambling for my map while driving.

No more. I realized I could train myself to think of not just the next turn but the next two or even three turns. That's what you can do as you plan

tomorrow: teach yourself to rehearse the next three things you are going to do during the day so you keep driving smoothly from one task to the next.

Planning sequentially the night before allows you to accomplish BOTH major tasks and minor necessities so all is complete by the end of the day. Remember, the most important time you spend in a day is the time you spend planning tomorrow.

Time-Saving Tip #23

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Five minutes of planning the night before + five minutes of calling to confirm appointments = a successful tomorrow.

It's Your Time

Plan Tomorrow the Night Before (Time Habit #6)

- Call or e-mail to confirm your events for tomorrow.
 - Keep a notepad at the same spot and write out tomorrow's tasks the night before.
 - At night, review how well your day's list worked and improve the one for tomorrow.
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Time-Saving Tip #24

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Plan tomorrow on paper—with tasks and a time frame assigned for each of your top three priorities.

It takes time, effort, and the ability to overcome setbacks. You have to approach each day with reasonable expectations and not get your feelings hurt when everything doesn't turn out perfectly.

—John Maxwell

..... Day 8

Change a Habit, Change Your Life



Motivation is what gets you started.
Habit is what keeps you going.

—Jim Rohn

Jane paused thoughtfully over her coffee as we discussed time-saving habits. “I’d like to make all of these mine,” she said, “but I don’t know where to start.” She listed the areas that were bogging her down—such as excess time on the computer, paper clutter, e-mail, and life in general. “When does catch-up time show up?” she asked. “I’d like to take a week off and get organized.”

“I understand,” I replied. “But you can’t do it all at once. You can do it, however, by focusing on acquiring one habit during each of the four seasons.” I showed her the chart below:

Jan.–March	April–June	July–Sept.	Oct.–Dec.
Being on Time	Limiting Computer Time	Completing Projects	Cutting Paper Clutter

“Oh, that’s good,” she replied. “I dream of walking out the door of an organized home in the morning, being on time, arriving at work to a clear desk, and having everything prepared for the day. And to think I could come home knowing what’s for dinner? That would be the frosting on the cake. Is it possible?”

Yes, it’s possible. But you have to know how to change your habits. A flurry of motivated efforts won’t keep your paper piles clear once and for all any more than three nights of sit-ups would permanently flatten your stomach. Habits bend to follow the path of least resistance. Unless

we shake them up and make some thoughtful choices, we’ll maintain the good and bad habits we have today, making it more difficult to change in the future.

The results of good habits show up right away. Those of bad habits take longer to appear—but their consequences are greater.

Time-Saving Tip #25

It takes twenty-one repetitions to create a new habit. Save time by changing a bad habit into a new one starting today.

How Much Time Can a Good Habit Save?

If you can tighten up just one habit to save five or ten minutes a day, the effect over the long term would be outstanding. For example:

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly
5 minutes	35 minutes	2 hours, 20 minutes	30 hours
10 minutes	1 hour, 10 minutes	4 hours, 40 minutes	60 hours
15 minutes	1 hour, 45 minutes	7 hours	84 hours
20 minutes	2 hours, 20 minutes	9 hours, 20 minutes	112 hours

We’d all like to have an extra 112 hours sitting in a lump sum at the end of the year. Instead, it shows up as a cushion of time in your daily life. The time is there. We just have to figure out how to keep it from slipping away.

Create Good Habits, Drop the Old

According to Webster's dictionary, a *habit* is "a pattern of action that is acquired and has become so automatic that it is difficult to break." Many of us know it takes twenty-one days of consistent practice to form a new habit.

That can take anywhere from three weeks to three months. Beyond that time frame, it will not stick!

A habit, good or bad, can save us time each day. Keeping your car keys in one spot, leaving at the same time for work, and going to bed at the same time each night are successful time habits that will keep you healthy and in good spirits. Putting money away in savings each month will ensure a lovely retirement. Time spent on good habits multiplies the same way.

If you are losing twenty minutes a day in some area of your life because of a poor habit, it's time to turn things around and replace it with a good habit.

Time-Saving Tip #26

A change in habit is an investment in a better future. Save ten minutes of morning indecision by creating a time plan for the next day.

How Can You Change a Habit?

You will change when your desire to change is greater than your desire to remain the same. It comes down to despising the pain more than the effort to make the change. Having a clear picture of what you want will catapult you forward toward tremendous success.

Write your desired changes as personal affirmations. Say them often enough, and soon they will become habits. Here are some examples of our seven time-saving habits:

1. "I arrive calmly and on time for my appointments."
2. "I save time by using two-minute pickups."
3. "I get off my computer at normal closing time each day."
4. "I power through my paperwork with confidence and clarity."
5. "I clean up clutter because I love the look of clean surfaces."

6. "I confirm appointments and line up items each night."
7. "I successfully change one habit at a time and enjoy the freedom it brings."

The Anatomy of a Realistic Twenty-one Times to Change a Habit

Anything that is measurable is changeable. Start by creating a chart with a spot for each of the twenty-one days. There are four levels to the process of creating a new habit by repeating it twenty-one times:

1–4 TIMES OF DOING A TASK—"I could do it if I just tried harder." Then old habits kick in with stress and time pressures. Keep going anyway.

5–10 TIMES—"I recognize the obstacles to doing it successfully." Then old habits kick in again and you feel like a failure. Just keep going.

11–15 TIMES—"I need to revisit my desired goal and focus on success." Old habits try to thwart you, but now you are determined. Keep going.

16–21 TIMES—"The goal is in sight, I know why I want it, and it is worth pushing through to success." You did it! Celebrate and enjoy your new habit.

HABIT CHANGE: COMPUTER TIME DOWN TO THIRTY-SIX HOURS A WEEK

Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.	TOTAL
#1	9 hrs.	8 hrs.	4 hrs.	10 hrs.	9 hrs.	4 hrs.	3 hrs.	47 hrs.
#2	7 hrs.	8 hrs.	5 hrs.	9 hrs.	7 hrs.	2 hrs.	2 hrs.	40 hrs.
#3	8 hrs.	7 hrs.	4 hrs.	8 hrs.	7 hrs.	1 hr.	1 hr.	36 hrs.

Then do it another twenty-one times to ensure permanent success. The best way to maintain a new habit is to strive for a "no-exceptions policy." Keep at it every day.

Habit Change: On-Time to Places 21 Times

Number the places from 1-21 you are on time until you reach your goal of 21. You will feel good and people will respect you more.

Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.	TOTAL
1 Dentist	2 PTA	3 Work	4 Work	0	5 Party	6 Church	1-6
7 Work	8 Staff	9 Lunch	10 Meeting	11 Staff	12 Soccer	13 Church	8-13
14 Work	15 Work	16 Work	17-18 Work Banquet	19 Work	20 Soccer	21 Church	21 Times!

What Makes a New Habit?

To make a new habit—one that is practiced routinely and automatically and is difficult to break—you need to work through a sequence:

- Step #1: Identify which habit you are going to change.
- Step #2. Recognize what the bad habit is costing you.
- Step #3. Picture yourself accomplishing the new habit.
- Step #4. Set a time to begin.
- Step #5. Find a measurable accountability system or person.
- Step #6. Recognize your weak point and find a way through it.
- Step #7. Practice the new habit twenty-one times in succession.

Time-Saving Tip #27

When you change a habit, you change your destiny. Pick one that will enhance your life.

Once you change one habit, you now have the power to change other time habits. Dr. Ray Strand, founder of HealthyLifestyles.com, says, “If you do something for three months, you change your focus. But if you do something for fifteen months, you change your life.” Turn a habit into a lasting lifestyle behavior that you can depend on.

It's Your Time

Change a Habit, Change Your Life (Time-Saving Habit #7)

Review your own time-saving habits and overcome the difficult ones.

Three of My Best Time Habits

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three of My Time Habits to Improve

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Watch your thoughts; they become your words.
Watch your words; they become your actions.
Watch your actions; they become your habits.
Watch your habits; they become your character.
Watch your character, for it will become your destiny.

—Frank Outlaw

