



77 Time Saving Tips for Busy Parents & Families

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Okay...

Why waste time reading a long introduction? Let's get started with some...

General Principles

1.

Combine tasks and errands. In other words, why make two trips when you could only make one?

2.

Delegate tasks and errands to those who can do it better, faster, or more conveniently. Be sure to compensate or reciprocate as needed.

3.

Have a schedule, but remain flexible. Think of a written out schedule as a budget for your time. This allows you to take more control of your time, instead of time controlling you.

4.

Be early whenever possible - it has a positive snowballing effect. Of course, you don't want to be too early (especially in social situations).

5.

Use small bits of time when they present themselves, they cannot be banked if unused.

6.

Have a planned "out" for rambling conversations (in person and on the phone). Don't lie, just come up with a good excuse. "Hey, it was great talking to you, but I got to get going", works well.

7.

Whether you are on hold, waiting for the doctor, or stuck in traffic; be prepared with something to do. Read, balance your checkbook, minor personal grooming, or any number of things can be done.

8.

Getting up five minutes earlier, and staying up just five minutes later will add up to an extra 2 1/2 days every year. Make it ten minutes in the morning and evening instead, and add 5 days to the year.

9.

If someone tells you to wait, ask how long it will take. Then you will have an idea of how much time you have to do something else.

10.

Practice speed reading for leisure. Work related or technical reading usually does not lend itself to all speed reading techniques, but it can still speed it up overall.

11.

Put things back where they belong after using them - not necessarily where you got them from.

Shopping

12.

Don't waste time trying to pay with exact change. It slows you and the people behind you down. It may seem faster, but remember the cashier gives change to the customer, not the other way around.

13.

Park close to the front of a store, but don't waste time driving around looking for the perfect space. Never use a handicapped spot if you don't need it. It's not okay, even if you'll only be "a few seconds".

14.

When buying canned goods, buy more than one can at a time. It won't take long to have a good amount on hand. It saves a lot of time when all you have to do is run to the pantry, instead of the store.

15.

Divide and conquer at the grocery store. Send one person to get frozen foods and produce while the other gets dairy products and canned goods, for example.

16.

Make a grocery list before you go shopping. It takes less time to refer to a list than trying to remember what you need; eliminating midweek returns to the store for forgotten items.

Communication

17.

Eliminate junk in your mailbox at home too. Do not send in warranty registration reply cards for small purchases. Read all privacy policies, and opt out of information sharing whenever possible.

18.

Before making a phone call, write down what you want to talk about. If your conversation goes off on a tangent refer to what you have written down.

19.

A cordless phone frees you to move from room to room while talking on the telephone. This way you can have the phone by you, instead of you having to be by the phone.

20.

One step better than a cordless phone is a hands-free device to keep both hands free while talking.

21.

Use caller ID to identify who's calling, and to avoid some telemarketers.

22.

Instead of wasting time giving telemarketers the brush-off, register for the national Do-Not-Call list. Visit: <https://www.donotcall.gov/> , or call toll-free at: 1-888-382-1222

23.

If you accidentally answer a call from a telemarketer try this: Tell them they may waste their time with you, or they can move on to someone else who is interested. They often have a quota, and won't waste their time. Tell them to put you on their do not call list.

24.

Touch each piece of mail only once. This saves filing and sorting time, ends looking for misplaced mail, and virtually guarantees that all of your bills will be paid on time.

25.

Put a waste basket where you sort through mail. Or, sort through mail over your wastebasket. Be sure to shred anything with personally identifying information.

Driving/Commuting

26.

Work closer to where you live. It saves money as well as time. It also enhances the sense of belonging and contributing to the community in which you live.

27.

Don't drive at excessive speeds. It's more expensive. The few moments you save can be wiped out by the time the friendly police officer has written you a ticket.

28.

Slowing down increases fuel economy. The less often you fill up is less time spent at the gas station.

29.

Paying at the pump means no waiting in line to pay for gas. And you won't waste time going inside to get a "quick" snack and something to drink, a lottery ticket, or chatting with the cashier.

30.

Get your oil changed where a free car wash and all fluid checks are included. It may cost a little more, but it's less than going to three different places. Combining tasks always saves time.

31.

Keep a bag in your car for garbage. It is quicker and cleaner to grab one full bag of garbage than it is to pick it up a piece at a time because it has gotten out of hand.

32.

Learn something during your commute with audio books from the library. Learn a new language, improve your memory, listen to a novel, or increase your vocabulary while you drive.

33.

When driving in urban areas, tune to local traffic reports to avoid delays and get alternate routes.

34.

Instead of changing where you work, move closer to where you work to reduce commuting time.

35.

Eat while commuting. Make sure the food is not too sloppy or difficult to handle, because traffic accidents are a definite waste of time. Be sure to consult local traffic laws, and use common sense.

36.

As soon as they are old enough, let your kids walk to school. As long as it is not too far, and the weather is not inclement they will be fine. Use your better judgment as a parent if you live too far away, or live in a high traffic, or high crime area. You will save the time you used to spend getting dressed to drive them to school, getting your kids in the car, driving them to school, finding a place to park, jockeying for position with the other parents, waiting for the crossing guard, getting them out of the car, waiting for the crossing guard again, and driving back home. Whew!

Work/Office

37.

Get your paychecks direct deposited. No more waiting in line, or forgetting to stop at the bank.

38.

If your employer doesn't offer direct deposit, put a deposit slip in your wallet (fill it out before you leave work) and stop at the bank on your way home.

39.

Commute during off peak times. Leaving for work 10 minutes early could actually save you much, much more.

40.

Throw away dried up pens right away. If it doesn't write now then it won't write later either.

41.

Time a few different routes to work to see which one is the fastest. You may find your perception of which way is the quickest does not line up with the way that is truly the quickest.

42.

E-mail is almost always quicker than a phone call. By their nature, e-mail messages tend to be brief. There is also the advantage of staying on topic when you are not engaged in a two-way conversation.

43.

You can do light exercise at your desk, while on the phone, or while driving. Isometrics, hand weights or a mild stretching routine are all good choices.

Household

44.

Arrange your key chain logically. Keep car keys together, for example. Or arrange them as you use them throughout the day. It is amazing how often we add a new key without any thought at all. Make sure to get rid of keys you no longer have a use for. I actually had a key to my school gym locker for years after leaving school.

45.

Buy postage stamps 100 at a time to avoid running to the post office to 'pick up a few stamps'. In the USA you can now buy 'forever' stamps that lock in today's prices regardless of future increases.

46.

Make a game of getting as much done during TV commercials as you can. You may surprise yourself with how much you can accomplish during those little blocks of two, three, or four minutes.

47.

When going from room to room take any items from the room you're in that belong in the room you are going to.

48.

Use a bookmark when reading. While reading use it as a guide to keep your eyes on the right line. When done put it where you left off.

49.

Sign up automatic payments on bills that are the same amount every month.

50.

Banks will often balance your checkbook register for you. Call the bank to see if and when they can do it. Run other errands and come back when it's done.

51.

"Code" your keys for feel and sight. This can be done using colored rubber bands, tape, sandpaper, or nail polish. It can make finding arranged keys even faster, it can also make it easier to find the right key in the dark.

52.

Mowing the lawn takes long enough as it is. To avoid wasting even more time raking the grass clippings, buy a self-mulching lawn mower.

53.

Never mow the lawn when the grass is wet. It takes longer and clogs the lawn mower.

54.

It takes less time to pay a kid in the neighborhood a few dollars to do it for, than it does for you to mow your own lawn, rake leaves, or shovel snow yourself.

55.

All other things being equal, shorter hair takes less time to wash, dry, and style. A triple whammy!

56.

Using a 2-in-1 shampoo and conditioner reduces shower time as well.

57.

Automatic toilet bowl cleaners decrease overall cleaning time, and time between cleanings.

58.

Cut out return addresses from envelopes and tape into your address book. Then when you receive mail from someone whose addressed has changed, you don't have to go through the trouble of erasing it, and re-writing it. Just tape in the new address.

59.

Keep a clothes hamper close to where you get undressed. It reduces clutter and puts all your clothes in one place for the laundry.

60.

Always have everyone go potty before leaving on a trip. In our house the phrase, "But I don't have to go!" is answered with, "Try anyway". (This includes Mom and Dad)

61.

Buy toothpaste with a flip top cap. No more lost cap or risk of the cap falling down the drain.

Kitchen

62.

Buy a coffee maker with a programmable timer. Save time and wake up to the aroma of fresh-brewed coffee.

63.

Sort silverware as you put it in dishwasher. That is, keep all spoons together, all forks, etc. This makes for faster and easier unloading.

64.

Microwave vs. Stove: The rule of thumb is that if the food you are cooking is dry microwaving is quicker, if it is mostly water the stove is usually the faster bet.

65.

When cooking, make double batches. One for now, one frozen for later use. (This works well with pancakes, waffles, french toast, brownies, cookies, vegetables, soup, beef, chicken, pork, etc.)

66.

Eat faster. Putting your fork down between bites may be polite, and help you stay slim, but it steals precious seconds from your day. Just kidding. But it shows there are areas we overlook for saving time.

67.

To cut down on preparation time in the kitchen purchase pre-cut fruits and vegetables.

Computer

68.

Paying bills online is very safe when done over a secure connection. An added benefit is that some places offer a discount or credit for using online payments instead of receiving a paper bill in the mail.

69.

Update your checkbook, or another task, while your computer is booting. On my old computer, rebooting would give me time to not only balance my checkbook, but enough time to balance the federal budget. (At least it seemed like it)

70.

Handle each piece of email only once: Save it - Delete it - Reply to it - File it

71.

Organize your computer bookmarks by category and how often you use them.

72.

If you are connected to the internet get a high-speed connection if it is available. Waiting for webpages to load will take mere seconds instead of minutes for graphic heavy pages.

73.

Use a pop-up blocker when browsing the internet. Most internet service providers now offer this feature. You can turn them off to see pop-ups you have to see (like sign up forms or info boxes).

74.

Set a countdown timer to limit 'fun' time wasters, like video games. Simply set the timer for 30 minutes, for example, and once the timer goes off you stop playing.

75.

Prevent identity theft. The time it takes to reduce your risk will far outweigh the time it takes to fix. Visit http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/con_minimize.htm for practical tips from the U.S. government.

76.

Eliminate junk in your email inbox by setting your options to 'exclusive' mode. That only lets people you allow to get through.

77.

Scan for viruses on a regular basis. Not all viruses slow down your computer, BUT they can cost hours and hours of time to remove them.

Pick your favorite of these quick tips, and see if they don't help make your day go smoother and save YOU time and energy!