



400+ Homeschool Moms Share Their Time Management
Frustrations, Strategies and Ideas

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Introduction

In preparing this **Homeschooling Time Management resource toolkit**, we decided to go right to the source and surveyed over **400 homeschool moms** to discover what Time Management concerns, secrets and suggestions they might offer if they could share their experiences with other families. The insights, frustrations, tips, and ideas that they shared are “real life” solutions that you'll be able to relate to and learn from as you work on managing your own homeschool and family time.

We haven't included all the responses we received on our survey here, because there obviously was some repetition. However, this cross-section of responses to our questions is representative of the shared concerns of other families, and the solutions they have found to address the unique time management issues that homeschool families face.

Some of the solutions that have worked for others may not be applicable to your own family situation, but every one of the thoughts and ideas shared here can be of value if you pay attention.

Learn... glean... apply what you can to your own situation. We hope this collection will help you manage YOUR homeschool, family and time in wiser and more profitable ways.

-- Jim Erskine
homeschoolradioshows.com

Question #1: What is your biggest Frustration in managing your time?

Trying to get all done that needs to be done in a day

Trying to find time for everything I want to teach.

My own lack of discipline to adhere to my schedule.

Interruptions from family members outside of the house who think because I am home schooling I can drop everything and tend to their needs.

I see shiny things and get distracted too easily - this eats up enormous amounts of our schooling time!

Planning for homeschool, doing it, and then getting the housework done. I guess also the unexpected things. We have had lots of those this year.

Scheduling of subjects, keeping clutter free enough to manage other tasks.

Never feeling like I have time to get it all done! Probably starts at the other side, thinking I must do more than I have time for.

I feel there are so many things I would like to do with my children and for my family, but before I am half way through the list the day is almost over.

Disruptions that can't be anticipated.

When I have the time to work with my kids they are doing something that they don't need my help with.

My own procrastination. There are days when I start my day reading a book, going online, or watching the news that the kids just don't seem to get their day going until lunch time. I need to stop what I'm doing and work with them, but I procrastinate.

So many cool things to do and not enough time to do them all!

Having time to plan mentally and physically for tomorrow, while working on the projects of today.

My kids cooperation!

My husband's constantly changing work schedule is one of our biggest frustrations. Wanting to get everything done before Dad comes home is difficult when dad comes home at different times. Most don't have to deal with this but those that do understand the difficulties.

The slowness of the kids--they dawdle and get distracted and don't use the time wisely.

Three volunteer jobs on top of home schooling means no time for exercise, and an embarrassing house.

interruptions! they get me off track, and never seem to have enough time to get all I want done. When I think I have it all planned out and something unexpected messes up my dream of a perfect homeschool day/week.

Others' perception of how to manage time in the home!

The days I just don't feel motivated, even if I have the day planned out sometimes I want to curl up and read instead.

My oldest child requires full time attention and takes up to 8 to 10 hours a day to complete assignments.

That no matter how well-planned a schedule is, it never works! Even when I try and 'wing it' for a day, it doesn't work either. Even after almost 2 years of homeschooling, I still haven't found what works.

My three kids that can undo as fast as I do.

It seems that the schedule I work out is always too full...and the kids don't work as fast as I expect them to! LOL!

The continual distractions of life. Children need to be corrected, phone ringing, too much time on computer.

I think that I would have to say that meal *planning* is the most frustrating thing in terms of time management. Meal prep takes more time, however, planning healthy meals while taking into account food allergies, health and just how the meal prep will fit into our varying schedule can be frustrating.

Giving all the one-on-one time each child deserves.

Interruptions to a scheduled day. They can be big interruptions (illness, car breaking, washing machine flooding, etc.) or little interruptions (bank deposit needing to be done NOW, a form that has to be filled out, a child getting a sliver, etc.) Even a good interruption, but a change to our schedule, nevertheless. Not having enough time to finish tasks...only start them, get interrupted, then never get back to them.

The biggest frustration I face is in my inability to say 'no'. I want to do so many things, and then often find myself stressed because I have taken on too much.

Sticking to my own schedule!

Finding lost items.

Balancing between doing the things that I feel are a priority (God's will) and meeting everyone's expectations.

Managing my own expectations of what's reasonable. I *want* to do more, but have to remember to leave room for normal stuff.

Getting everything accomplished without being worn out by 9:00 in the evening so I can have a little time with just my husband.

The demands of others on my time. Those who rely on me to do the things they could do with a little forethought.

Not enough of it! My biggest frustration is that almost everything I plan to do takes longer than what I had figured. Not necessarily everyday things like chores--but more projects or school planning, etc.

Having friends or family call during school hours and expect that I can just "chat".

Getting back on track when we've had an interruption during the day.

My biggest frustration is when interruptions happen, such as dealing with a child's attitude when all I can think about is how quickly that project could get done without that interruption.(Which I know I need to plan for) I can't count how many times my little ones and I will be in the middle of a lesson, or on a real learning roll, and the phone will ring or someone will be at the door.

Getting started in the morning....I have a lot of stragglers of I'm not hungry...that sort of thing. distractions....This is a down fall for me

The biggest frustration is the amount of time I have to devote to household chores when I would love to be able to spend more enriching time with the children. With three young ones, the balance has tipped and I am having so much trouble sitting down for fear of being swallowed by a giant laundry pile!

I can't decide what I need to do first and go from one project to another.

ME! When I'm too intense about the time and really pushing the kids to "get it done"! and, naturally, they balk and take WAY longer. I have to stop and just breath; and remember that it's not about the assignment so much as it's about the child. -- humbling!

Probably overcoming the temptatation to plan too much- unrealistic aspirations for what could/should be accomplished in a given day/week/year!

One word: DISTRACTION. Whether it be with the computer, a child misbehaving, spending time chatting with my husband during school time or housework.....I can't stay focused and involved with the children when I'm doing one of the above mentioned items.

I have too many things I WANT to do. Establishing priorities and remaining FOCUSED are my biggest challenges.

Question #2:

In your role as a teacher, what tips or suggestions have you found most helpful in managing YOUR homeschooling time more effectively?

I planned a schedule and if the kids take time or waste time, they finish after school as homework. For example, math should take an hour, if at the end of the hour they aren't done due to fooling around, they have homework.

Making a schedule and sticking to it the best you can. Don't answer the phone, and put a sign on the front door saying that school is in session.

DO NOT: ...answer the phone... ...check your email... ...open the door for the well meaning neighbor. Develop routines for your day that your kids can depend on.

Finally learning that learning truly is everywhere, and making the effort to teach through everything.

Planning, Planning, Planning. An annual plan works well, because you know what your goals are for your children and you can make effort to accomplish them. It doesn't always mean that my child and I are strict about following it to the T, but it does provide us a structure to work with. This has helped me to be more happy in homeschooling my son.

Getting up before the children to have my quiet time, shower, and exercise. We have Bible first with breakfast and our day seems to go much smoother since we have established our priorities.

Your family is unique. Your schedule will (and should) look different than that of all other families. Go over completed schoolwork ASAP. This provides immediate feedback for students and avoids huge piles of schoolwork to check/grade later. Prepare lesson plans ahead as much as possible. Then reevaluate each weekend to adjust for needs and/or attempt to keep on track.

I set a timer for when I'm online. I also keep a note pad with me to jot down things I remembered that I need to do. I have a block of time before lunch and around 3:45 to work on my personal to-do list, so the remainder of the time, I'm working with the kids.

Saying "No!" If I'm asked to do something and I don't feel the Lord is leading me to it, or I know it's going to affect my family in a negative way time wise, I say no.

Network with other families and use each other to share the process (teach one another's' kids different things).

Get the household stuff out of the way so that everyone can focus on learning instead of the pile of dishes or laundry or Get the cooking challenge out of the way - teach everyone how to get their own breakfast, have someone in charge of a SIMPLE lunch and do bulk cooking or a cooking exchange in the freezer for dinner, use the slow cooker on the days you'll be out and about. If you can get these two things (household and cooking) under control it frees up a TON of time and helps everyone focus on teaching/learning.

“Priority” suggests ONE thing. Having 5 Things on your priorities list doesn't work. Make sure you are working towards the #1 goal i.e. sentence structure, and then pool other things around it. You'll go to sleep knowing you worked on the top thing even on a hectic serviced jumbled day.

Have as much as possible done before you need it--pencils sharpened, books and worksheets easily accessible, schedule for the day printed out and ready to go, etc.

Let it go if they are frustrated, come back to it later, weeks later or maybe months later, and they will get it. Relax, they learn anyway.

If I start my day with God my day and time run so much smoother. I have experimented and the days I don't read and pray first thing I am frustrated and feel overwhelmed. Also, I learned from another homeschooler this. God has given us each the same amount of time. If you waste that time you can't get it back. So when the children waste the time have them do something for God for that same amount of time.

Set the timer so you know and your students know when it's time to stop. SHORT lessons keep everyone moving and attentive.

The only thing I have discovered is that if we don't start our 'school' by a specific time of the day, it isn't going to happen. As a family, we have to begin our school work by 10:30 or it's all lost. Our school time is more productive and rewarding when I don't let chores (shopping, cleaning, and other busywork) distract me from being involved with the learning experience.

The best thing I have found is to be flexible, and to make homeschooling fit our lives, rather than the other way around. With five kids involved in lots of activities, we find creative ways to learn. That is one reason why audiobooks work so well. We can take them with us when we are on the go. We also make our family time at home fun. Rather than just watch t.v., we have a family time a few nights a week where we watch an educational movie together. This has been fun, and educational.

We try to get up early and get school done in the morning. Then, if “something happens”, we have an opportunity to “catch up” later in the day. We do not schedule activities outside the home until the afternoon or evening.

Be satisfied with what you do get finished, and enjoy the time working on it. (as opposed to checking off boxes on a list of completed items).

Turn on the phone answering machine and do not pick up unless it is an emergency. Consider just unplugging the phone during school time to decrease the temptation to answer incoming calls.

I know this is obvious but how many of actually do this: Putting everything in its own place and a place for everything. DEcluttering is another BIG help. The more stuff you have, the more stuff you have to take care and have a place for. There's SO MUCH “stuff” out there.... You CAN'T use it ALL. If you can't find a place for it - do you really need it?

Older students can do a lot of work independently. Teach the same thing to all of the students - just at different levels. Have a list of independent things even younger children can do on their own so that they can use their time productively if they finish early or you are otherwise not available at that

moment.

Streamline as much as possible. I try to work out a plan where I can keep all the needed records on all the children in one place so that I'm not having to switch from one book to another or having to transform information from one method to another. I look at the ways the information needs to be reported to satisfy any state requirements as well as any other things we need to report (like high school credits, etc.) and try to make the recording of the information as simple as possible.

I have a posted schedule for every member of the family including 1/2 hour segments for all subjects and chores. Many subjects do not take the full half hour so there is a little time to add to those subjects we want to spend a little longer at. It also helps to have the kids up, dressed, beds made and ready for whatever the day holds. This way that mad rush to get everyone dressed and ready to head out the door does not happen.

We use driving time for a lot of schooling. Both kids are expected to have a current book they are reading with them in the car if we will be in the car for more than 5 minutes. The kids also do math or Spanish flashcards with each other in the back seat while I drive. We also keep small notebooks back there for them to write down any questions they have that mommy can't answer on the spot. That way we don't forget to look them up when we get home!

It always helps us tremendously if I lay down the law and say NO READING or PLAYING until after school is done. We have to get up, dress, eat, do chores, and get right to school, or else the morning drags on and nothing is accomplished or done in an orderly manner.

Don't over plan what can be accomplished in a day (it always takes longer than you think.)

Spend one week to a month in the summer to plan and organize the whole year. It saves lots of time and frustration of trying to wing it as you go. Be flexible in that schedule so that as life happens it does not create a panic when it (and it will) interrupts your schedule. It will have to be tweaked from time to time.

1. Making lists and plans and schedules every single day for that day and days ahead and then keeping them handy for reference.
2. Keeping a "Mom Notebook" around me at all times with lesson plans, record pages, list, schedules etc. all in one place.
3. Read ahead of the kids: ie. reading assignments, history books, science books and experiments. In other words KNOW the material before your child ventures into it! This saves you time during your actual school time and also if you try to multi-task while kids work independently...you can answer or give help quickly and easily.
4. Keeping house clean and organized is a MUST. Great learning usually does not happen in CHAOS...when things are organized and easily accessible, children or you can grab what is needed for whatever project is assigned.
5. Clean up is a must after EVERY project!
6. We do chores every morning before school and every night before bed to keep things running smoothly.
7. We also prepare our meals as much ahead as possible using the "Once-A-Month" cooking concept.
8. Just wait! I am such an impulse person and it has been very difficult for me to learn that waiting can be a very good thing...not every issue or thing has to be addressed the minute it comes up. Sometimes time itself can be our best friend.
9. We try to have blocks of time for school where others are aware of those times. It doesn't always work but it has cut back on interruptions. I keep saying that one day I am making a sign to hang on my front door: "Do not disturb, school in process"... but I worry it may appear rude. I do see a need however to protect your "school time" to some extent.
10. Even though I list this last it is by far the most important key to our homeschool/life success. Seek the Lord's heart for your day everyday! Seek

what HE has planned for you!!! Start fresh every morning with HIM! No matter what happened the day before (losing your temper, getting impatient and frustrated with a child, neglecting a need)...wherever you fell short...lay it at HIS feet, ask forgiveness and seek His strength to not repeat it this day! Ask for JOY!!! I really think the Lord LOVES to give us a joyful heart and attitude!!! When we spend our first fruits with HIM in the morning, He seems to linger with us all the rest of the day!!! and here is another biggie! Pray for your kids! Really, really pray for your kids!!!! Ask the Lord to show you what you need to be to them that day...ask for His wisdom ahead of time and His eyes to see. Lay their attitudes or shortcoming at HIS feet and seek HIS heart with how to approach or reproach. I recently put a sign up over my kitchen window that I painted onto an old reclaimed piece of wood: "Thy heart, Lord will I seek!" It reminds me to seek HIS face first thing everyday!!!

First of all, I need to stay focused on school and not go off on MY OWN rabbit trails. For example, if we're in the middle of an assignment, I'll sometimes say, "I'm going to do this (bit of housework or internet research) while you're working on that." but when he's done I don't stop what I'm doing to move him on to the next step/subject. Next thing I know, I've "lost" an hour or more of the day that can't be re-claimed. I HAVE to start any non-school project with the mind-set that I'm going to stop when he's done with his assignment - even if I'm not done!

Relax, relax, relax. They don't have to know every there is to know. Focus on the essential basics. The rest will come in time as they grow and develop their own interests on their own time. setting long and short term goals helps me see the big picture. We do daily, weekly yearly and long-range (after high school) goals.

I have adopted SHORT lessons, and I've looked for curriculum that is easy to understand and does not involve a lot of teacher preparation. I also have eliminated busy work - all school work has to have purpose!

I try to start the more challenging subjects and end with the more enjoyable (i.e. read-alouds). I have learned what gets left to last, unless we really want to do it, does not get done.

Be up and ready to go, including breakfast and work to be done laid out, BEFORE the kids awake.

Taking the time to plan out our study schedule saves me lots of time. I begin to do this before our study year begins by 1) Getting the calendar for the year done; 2) Copying the Table of Contents from each text and writing the dates for each chapter; 3) Placing all this information onto my database so that I get a weekly schedule. God worked 6 days and rested on the 7th, so we work for 6 weeks and rest on the 7th. We begin our study year in mid-August and finish early June. We don't follow this schedule at Christmas (we rest after 5 weeks for 2 weeks) and at the end of the year (we work for 7 weeks then start vacation). We find that we don't get burned out.

Teaching my children to be able to do their work on their own, only asking for help when they aren't able to find answers on their won.

Treat it like a 'real' job/career(bc that's what it truly is)! Take it VERY seriously. I know this may sound silly to some, however, I fell into the trap of thinking that because we school at home, where it is laid back, that I could be laid back about getting around to schooling! I would suggest to anyone not already doing so to set become ultra-organized with your time. Just put yourself in the mindset of a teacher who works out in the public/private sector. Rise early, plan ahead for everything, shower and dress and

eat a good breakfast then get going with school. I have to school early otherwise it never gets done. Make some preparations the night before. Find materials and resources and have them prepped. Turn off the phone during lesson time. Consider school time a non-negotiable appointment. Do not overestimate your ability to multitask - the kids are usually the losers on that one.

NO ELECTRONICS (video games, computers, music) for the kids until AFTER they have completed their school work for the day. This is a must!

Choosing specific days for specific tasks. Tuesday is floor day, Monday is sheets and towels day, etc. Knowing my own bio-rhythms and working with them. I do my thinking in the morning, my physical activity in the afternoon. Writing all tasks down, and then assigning them an action step on my calendar. If they aren't turned into an action, they don't get done!

Establish a routine and stick to it as much as possible. Post your schedule and be sure everyone understands what must be done when. It's taken years for my children to make the routines a habit, but when they finally do, it's a huge load off of me.

Keep life simple even minimal. Expectations need to be simple, outside commitments need to be minimal. Simple isn't the same as easy or lazy, when you keep things simple you can be flexible in how you meet goals especially school goals.

I have found that by making a grid for each child at the beginning of the year that has all of the child's subjects listed down one side and a column for each day of the week, I am able to quickly write out each week's assignments. I just print out a copy for each week on card stock (otherwise they tear out of a three ring binder too easily), three hole punch it, and put them in a 3-ring binder. Each week I can look at what was completed the previous week and write in the new assignments. The children check off the work as it is completed.

1. Teach discipline first and foremost. All studies come to a halt when an attitude or discipline problem arises.
2. Give each child some 1 on 1 time - even the littlest. In fact start with the littlest so they get their "tank filled" and can go play.
3. Have the "free" school age child play with the little ones while another school ager does school. Show them how to play nicely, when to come to you for help, give them an appropriate list of things that they can do while you are busy teaching.

Set aside EVERYTHING else and devote your time to homeschooling. Don't try to homeschool AND run your business during the same period of time, or get housework done, or reply to emails. Just focus on one thing...homeschooling.

My biggest tip is to establish a WRITTEN daily routine, that can be followed through on, for most days, even in other environments, or if life gets busy with other things. Consider agreeing on this routine as a family and getting a written commitment from each member they are in agreement. We currently have our schedule stepped out on a big poster and this big format has been very helpful! It is imperative to establish a sense of accomplishment and accountability with homeschooling children. They may not have a "due date" for that written report. However, teach early that school is priority and needs to be done before moving on to other things. Be clear but realistic with your expectations.

Reward good effort and successes whenever able. Withhold privileges if "diddle daddling" occurs... YOURself included!

The most helpful tip for managing our homeschooling time is to map out our world view and continue to bring our school subjects back to that. It helps me as the teacher not to get side tracked.

For a while it worked to have an older child working with or taking care of a younger child while I worked with another. And then have them trade off. Now the oldest really need that time to get some independent work done. They still help with the younger but not for as big a chunk of time. Absolutely look at it as a job-I can't talk on the phone or allow others to steal my time. If I MUST step away-have something ALREADY prepared for them to do while you're gone - a page on multiplication, work on penmanship, finish the sentences you never got to, etc. Anything they can do on their own. Train them to be responsible when they see you step away it means, I've got work to do, and hold them accountable to it. On your end, make it short and quick and train your family and friends by not answering the phone during school time. When you do return the call, explain you couldn't answer the phone because you were in the middle of school.

Separate the kids when they are working independently and in one of those harass each other moods.

Getting a good night's sleep so I can cope better with the next day. I wish it was easier to practice.

Everyone must be dressed with chores done prior to breakfast. If I relax on this policy, it is too hard to get my kids back together to begin bible study or school.

Question #3:

What other time saving and time management secrets would you want to share with other homeschooling families?

Relax! Remember the big picture and love them, live life with them, and do the work together. Even if you don't do every book/curriculum, the atmosphere makes everything work together better.

Planning meals and having a basic schedule. I'm not the greatest at this, but it is one of my goals for this next school year.

Bookmark all the sites you find that are related to homeschooling or document them in some way... Because you never know when you will need it.

I set the tone for the amount of work that gets done in a day. If I get up and am ready for the day before the kids are out of bed, I can tackle quite a bit of my to-do list. Also, when the kids get up and see me working, they are more likely to get their morning chores done and their schoolwork started on time.

Have everyone chip in and help when things need to get done. This saves lots of time!

I like to have our evenings free from school activities. I think we all need a break to enjoy each other as family, separate from school.

A routine works better than a schedule. Go with what works for your family and don't try and be another family. If you are late risers go with that (it's one of the benefits of homeschooling), if you have night owls, go with that. If you have a schedule you usually always feel behind (and unsuccessful) if you have a routine it's more flexible and some really cool learning serendipities can come from that.

Every morning do a load of laundry. every evening run the dishwasher. Every evening fold, every morning put the dishes away. You will not have the guilt of the laundry pile or dishes in the sink. :)

Have a place for everything and then people can put everything in its place. Be creative if you don't have much room. A dresser by the door for everyones mittens, hats and scarves during the winter. A dresser for toys - each child having a drawer for their special things. I always watch and ask how other families do things and judge if those ideas would work in our home. Some won't because of the way our house is but others work well.

WWW. FLYLADY.NET!!!!!! (Many, MANY of our respondents highly recommended this site.)

I have found in our home that I have a very high standard. Standards are good, but need to be realistic. Sit down, look at what takes so much time and see if it can be modified. Don't look at what others are doing, do what works for your family.

Don't be a procrastinator or a perfectionist. Neither mentality works in a homeschool environment. Actually, being a perfectionist leads to the procrastinator, so they're really the same thing. If something goes wrong once, don't hold back from trying it again because you're afraid it won't be perfect.

Teaching children to help around the house and requiring they do so helps the family run efficiently.

Do as much planning or scheduling during the summer as possible.

Be flexible, and lower your standards. You are busy educating your kids. Life happens. Don't sweat it. So what if your house doesn't look like a friend or relative's, who isn't homeschooling. You've got kids home all day, every day. See it for the blessing it is, and don't get stressed out about keeping your house spotless. Look at all the great learning going on!

You don't have to do it all. Cut out the extras that are only stressing you out.

Run the dishwasher (if you have one) every single evening! The children put the dishes away in the morning before breakfast. An empty dishwasher in the morning really helps our kitchen stay tidy throughout the day.

Always be open to suggestions!

Have older children teach younger children. They actually enjoy this. Having the children have set chores for a period of time. My children get chores by their age. When they get to a certain age they graduate to a more difficult chore. They actually look forward to it. They also teach the younger sibling coming on how to do that chore and mentor them for a while, before moving on.

Make sure you get plenty of rest at night. Most important - don't forget to spend some quiet time with the Lord!

Streamline your teaching. You may think using a lot of different pre-canned curricula is time saving, but each has a different underlying philosophy and method of doing things. Developing your own philosophy and deriving a methodology from it will give a unified way of educating to your home and you can focus on the actual studies, rather than figuring out how to do them. We base our philosophy upon Biblical principles of education and teach more on it at: <http://frommeandmyhouse.com/led.htm> a tried and true one--have a home for everything and in its home it should be when not in use.

Make school fun up to a point...Saves on fights. Teach your children the art of being best friends, instead of listening to all the bickering. All this robs you of your time with them and getting what you need done too.

Try not to get overwhelmed. If you don't get every single thing done you had planned for that day, so what. It only means God had other plans for you that day, and we all know He never makes mistakes. So sit back and thank Him for helping you remember who is in-charge and why you decided to homeschool in the first place.

Watch that your goals and expectations for your children are different. My goal is that someday they will be able to do their chores independently, but my expectation is that they will need reminders and help for now.

Pin socks together with large safety pin before putting them in dirty laundry (with 9 kids this is a must - no more sorting socks!!)

Don't think you need to do 6.5 hours of school like the public schools. Much of their day is waiting in line and playing, and teachers still use time killing activities like coloring sheets. When you take out all of the wasted time in public schools, it is probably less than 3 hours of instructional time at the elementary level.

Eliminating/Limiting sports and TV/movies allows your kids more time to explore and learn and gives families more time to spend together or to do things for others.

Toys!! They reproduce and multiply regularly!! Some times all we have time to do is throw everything in a trash bag and put it in the garage (where we keep our buckets of sorted toys). Then on a rainy day: sort them into their proper containers! Until then the kids don't get to dig in the bags to find stuff they want. In the winter they have to wait a long time as the garage is un-heated!

I learned that the biggest obstacle to getting my work done was not lack of time or energy, but the amount of "stuff" that I have allowed into my house. It is easy to clean a space that has no clutter.

Simplify your life! Get rid of knick-knacks, glean all the unused clothes, limit toys etc. The less you have, the less you must maintain. What really blesses the life of your family and what just takes up your time in maintenance?

I am a LIST maker! I have an erasable board on the fridge. All important stuff for the day can be jotted down there. Somehow with bold marker, I don't forget things as easily as when it is not written down.

Tend to small problems as they occur so they don't grow into BIG ones!

Early to bed, early to rise. Just getting up a half an hour before the rest of the family, getting dressed to your shoes, and spending a little quiet, peaceful time with the Lord, creates an atmosphere in your home that fosters a good day.

For portfolios, have the kids go through their work from the week on Friday and pick one piece from each required subject they would like to include in the portfolio - at the end of the year you will have about 36 examples to choose from to include and your work is almost done by the end of the year - instead of waiting until the last minute!

Get help. Enlist Grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, distant cousins. If you are teaching a topic where you know someone who is an expert, get your kids some time with them. Foster independence with your kids' school work and allow other caregivers to manage them and their schooling for a day here and there. You'll be amazed at how much they get done when they are given the ownership of it. And, I've found that if grandparents are asked to help, they are much more positive about homeschooling, which is passed on to the kids.

Break large jobs into small chunks so that you are not overwhelmed. Every little helps.

Make sure your children know what they can do to help around the house. They should have their own chores to do so they are contributing members of the household. It is so important to teach them these responsibilities while they are young.

Cook in a crockpot. Great time saver – dinner is cooking while you are doing other activities. At least once a week put on the crock pot right after breakfast and not have to think about dinner!

All window cleaning is done on same day. All swiffering and vacuuming is done one same day. Kids have the same chores for a entire year so there is no question who is suppose to do that chore. Then they train next youngest child to do their chore for a few weeks, then it is now the younger child's chore for one year. We change chores at summer time so the learning curve is during the summer not school time.

Always remember that there will be days where a schedule/routine just don't happen..don't get down on yourself because of those occasional days

Hang in there, Day after tomorrow all the kids will be gone and you will miss these hectic days.

Do your best to carve out some “me” time even if it's only for 15 to 30 min. a day. It helps to rejuvenate you and makes you feel less like a servant and more like a homeschooling mom. Also, be forgiving of yourself. If you don't have a home that would grace the covers of a Martha Stewart magazine be thankful. That means your house is lived in and the people in it are probably much happier too.

Schedule all appointments (doctor, dentist, etc) one day a week. On that day, plan to do particular assignments, such as reading, that can be done in a waiting room or vehicle.

Time is an earthly measure. I sometimes worry about it far too much. My goals should be in the eternal realm. When I think of eternity, and live for that, I find that my time issues are of much less consequence. I wish I could just keep this mindset when i am trying to get ready for church on Sunday morning and everything is going haywire! LOL

Routines/schedules are NOT chains to bind you; they are the wings that help you fly. Using a routine, means that you can start and stop it as necessary and isn't time dependent. I have heard before that you may think that you don't have routines or that you couldn't follow a routine; but you DO have a routine, it just doesn't help you if it is a 'broken' routine. Creating a few routines for specific times of day, morning, before bed, before husband comes home, school time, etc., can really help you manage what seems to be unmanageable.

Planning frees up daily life. I spend a few weeks planning before school starts. This saves hours of thinking on my feet/reacting/wasting time figuring things out and simplifies our school life. Schedule time for mommy exercise and 15 minutes alone to think. If it's not in the schedule it will never happen; if it's scheduled it will happen enough to make a difference. Frantic minds lead to frantic life/school. Take time to find calm.

Keep a shopping list on the fridge when you run out of things you can add them to the list, this saves time when you need to make up the list and at the store.

Let others help.

Keep a bottle of Windex, Scrub Free sink cleaner and a roll of paper towels in each bathroom. Request that each family member cleans up after themselves by wiping up messes after their turn in the restroom. This will keep your restrooms “company ready” longer and leaving supplies in each bathroom saves time.

Keep a calendar (one small enough to take with you and large enough to be functional) and write down everything that that comes up that you need to do. This keeps you on track and also serves as a record of your life! Set “computer hours” or “Teacher Prep Time” for yourself and stick with it.

I make lists of needs for myself and for my husband. I talk to other families from church about how things go at their houses. I try to prioritize so important things get accomplished.

Have your shower at night before you jump in bed - that way you're always clean in your lovely bed, and you don't have to wander about in your dressing gown in the morning trying to fit a shower in before schooling, you can just get dressed 'cause you're still clean.

Use chore charts that are color coded per person in the house

A basic menu plan with one monthly large trip to the grocery/mega store. Then pick up milk and such each week.

We moved our schoolroom into the kitchen area instead of having it in a separate room of the house. Now I can work on my jobs while the kids work on their schoolwork. This is waaaaay more efficient!

Working together as a team. Letting each child have responsibilities and training them to do a thorough job. Have certain areas of the house that get cleaned on specific days. Don't try to do too much in one day. Have children learn time management and give them an allotted time to get the work done. Moms, GET OFF THE COMPUTER!

Have a basket that everything laying around the house gets put in. At the end of the day the basket is cleaned out and things are put up.

Forms, forms, forms! Write it down and then check it off as it gets accomplished.

Start looking at your everyday activities, and see how that can be viewed as educational. My daughter is helping with the cooking and baking, and that counts for home ec, and she is learning about other countries and food, she uses math, reading, etc. We talk about things all the time in the car...politics, religion, history. Using the car as an educational tool has been a huge timesaver for us. Rather than wasted time, it has become a main staple in our homeschooling day. When in town waiting for another child's activity, we bring along schoolwork and do it together. It is a time when there are fewer interruptions, such as the phone, etc.

Have school in its own space. If you homeschool on the kitchen table, you have to put books away to eat and then get them back out after you've cleaned up from the meal. If you have a school table in another location, books can be left open where they are, while lunch and clean up are taking place.

A child who is old enough to walk around is old enough to help maintain the household. This requires significant supervision at first, but leads to a huge time saver very quickly. While they're helping clean up, small children aren't making messes somewhere else.

Using a timer...even the most dreaded task seems manageable if you know you only have to give it your best for 15 minutes! 99% of the time, that task will be well completed before the timer dings!!

#1 My kids love 5-10 min "panic cleaning" we've done in the past. After an hr of working hard on a subject, set the timer and do 5-10 mins (depending on the schedule for the day) of cleaning, tidying, or whatever. #2 Make it a "subject" in "life skills" class. Get the kids involved regularly. #3 Don't sweat the details. Sometimes just getting the clutter picked up and the obvious stuff done is all there's time/energy to handle. #4 clean the shower while you're in it... you're cleaning yourself, why not a section of the wall too? Have the boys clean the back of the toilet (that space between the lid's hinges and the tank) after they use it themselves. Wipe down the sink & counter as part of the routine of putting the stuff you use to get ready for the day away. #5 put it back right away! Use it, then put it away.

www.Flylady.net has helped me tremendously. The Flylady encourages routines and using a timer. Her motto is "You can do anything for 15 minutes." That has really stuck with me and made a huge difference in my life.

Being consistent with small chores means that I rarely have a large mess to deal with.

Listening to the audio Bible helps keep us harmonious.... God's Word is soothing

Prepare 2 casseroles instead of one when preparing. Put the second in the freezer for future use. Get chores done before you start school, it is much quicker than letting the house get a total wreck.

I spend almost all of my grocery money in one store--I made a list of items that we buy and put the list in the same order as the store's arrangement. Then I printed a copy and posted it on the fridge. Anytime someone realized we were out of something, they just circled the item on the list. When it was time to go grocery shopping, my list was already prepared, and I could zoom in and out of the grocery store in record time, with no backtracking all over the store! This cut my grocery store time about in half.

I assign one child a day to be responsible for making and passing out a simple morning snack. The purpose of this is two-fold: first, I am not constantly nagged by children wanting something to eat because they know we have a set snack time (and they'll lose it if they ask before it's snack time) second, I can continue on with school while one of the kids is making/gathering the snacks.

I have the 'weekly' house cleaning broken down into daily chores so a little gets done every day rather than have a marathon day.

Invest in a divided dirty clothes hamper (or buy several). As everyone gets undressed at night have them put their dirty clothes in the appropriate hamper, i.e., whites, darks, lights. 2. Put a load of laundry in the washer as soon as you get up in the morning. 3. Have everyone participate in folding laundry while you read aloud or watch TV. 4. Have a weekly dinner menu planned so you know what to buy at the grocery store and so you're not in a panic at 5 p.m. trying to decide what to make for

dinner. 5. Pick up the clutter from your home daily so things don't get out of hand. 6. Don't let piles of anything grow anywhere in your home. They are too overwhelming to tackle.

I used to try to get things done while the kids read to me, but now I just take the time to totally focus on them. It is funny but I still get everything done and don't feel as flustered.

I don't fold socks or underwear. We have a sock box and only buy white socks. Easy to reach in and grab what you need.

We count every other Friday as Home Economics Day. We use this day to clean, shop, cook, complete household projects, etc. and sometimes as a day to catch up on incomplete work. This has helped reduce stress for me and my children.

Have a library bag for completed books to go into- no running around trying to find all the library books.

Our children (ages 5 and 9) are paid for the household jobs that they do. They have a list of age/ability appropriate jobs that they can choose from, know in advance how much those jobs pay, track the jobs they complete and turn in the JOB CHECKLIST at the end of the week to earn their "paycheck". Their JOB CHECKLIST helps them calculate amounts that go to Giving, Saving and Spending. Getting our children involved in keeping house teaches them personal responsibility, teamwork, the satisfaction of earning and saving money and the joy of tithing.

Have everyone keep their desk and/or drawers clean. It makes it easier to find what you need quickly. We also have our school supplies organized: pencils are sharpened and kept in a labeled box, colored pencils, markers and crayons have another box, and glue, tape and various art supplies in another. Keep a timer hanging up in our classroom. This keeps lessons from being drawn out too long (especially those that children can get caught up in). Last, we have a chore chart hanging up that reminds everyone to clean up their desk areas daily and then a week's end cleaning list: sharpening pencils, emptying sharpener, cleaning chalkboard, wiping down desk and dusting the bookcases, globe and drawer units. Keep it a team effort!

HAVING a MENU planned out for the week or two weeks. I love knowing what I need to thaw the night before and what I can put in the crock in the morning to not have to worry about! I make a grocery list and buy only the stuff I need for that week. Also, I try and save time in the morning by making breakfast (or preparing a big portion of it) at night the day before. Cooking ahead on weekends has saved my time during the week day too.

Schedule things like piano lessons, sports, etc. on the same day if possible. This limits the amount of time you are away from home. There's nothing worse than wasting time driving around town.

Definitely, start with the work, or more drudgery-oriented task first. If the kids have a reward coming after their school work/chores are done, they are more motivated to get their work done. Swimming, for instance. Or a video, since by then Mom is exhausted anyway.

I love bleach wipes! I keep one container on every floor of my house, so I can wipe surfaces down while I am there on other errands!

Staying on task. If I am dusting, and I come across something that is not where it should be. If I leave to put that Item back where it belongs, then I find something in that room that needs to be done, I will never get back to dusting. I make piles in the room that I am in. Things to put back somewhere else, Trash, give away. Then when I am done with that room, I go to take the piles and do with them as needed. Then move on.

Train the children to do those things they can (which is way more than most people give them credit for being able to handle). This doubles as life skills training for when they leave home.