

## Handle Chores, House Cleaning and Errands with Simple Systems

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The key to creating calm and simplicity in your life is creating simple systems, instead of haphazard systems of chaos that form naturally when we don't give thought to these things.



We've talked about creating a simple system for [handling mail and paperwork](#), and others for things like [errands and email](#). Today, let's look at how simple systems for chores, cleaning, yard work and errands can simplify your life and bring order to the chaos.

### **From Complicated Systems to Simple**

First, let's take a look at some of the complicated systems we might have for these things, when we don't give them much thought, and how they can stress us out. See, when you don't intentionally design a system, one will form anyway, and it probably won't be an optimal system. But it's the one we use, so we just continue to use it.

For example, let's look at a complicated system that might form for cleaning our house if we don't intentionally design it:

- We intend to keep things clean, but our lives get busy, and things come up, and we're tired when we get home. Things start to get messy.
- Company is coming over! We clean like crazy at the last minute, raising our stress levels. Still, we only do a quick clean, which means there's still a lot of clutter and mess even when the guests do come over.
- We let things deteriorate some more until the next guest comes over, or until we're sick of things. There is really bad dust under the furniture, grime in that "crisper" drawer in the fridge, and we don't even want to talk about the bathtub.

Now, you might not be this bad, but you can kind of get the idea. No system is designed, so things get complicated. And we get stressed out at the last-minute cleaning, and by the constant mess.

**The solution:** design a simple system intentionally, making a routine that works for you, and alter it if it doesn't make sense. Write out the system, so it is formal, and try to stick to it as much as possible — religiously, if possible.

### **House Cleaning: A Simple System**

For all of these simple systems in this article, please remember that they are just examples. You should modify them to fit your life. And another important guideline: write them down, put them somewhere you'll see them, and focus on making them a habit for at least a month.

Here's a sample system for house cleaning:

1. First, have a big weekend dedicated to cleaning, so you can start your system with a clean slate. Get the whole family involved (if you have one), and clean one room at a time, from top to bottom, clockwise, until you're done. It also helps to get rid of clutter. You might need two big weekends if there's a lot of cleaning to do.
2. From now on, have a clean-as-you-go routine: when you're getting ready in the morning, do a quick wipe of the sink and toilet and bathtub. Put things away as you go through the day, wash dishes when you're done using them, wipe the counters and table when you're done cooking or eating.
3. Also have a daily routine: Every morning, make your bed, take out the trash, and do a quick pick-up. In the evening, sweep the kitchen/dining room, clean up after dinner, and do a quick pick-up before bed.
4. Have a weekly routine: either designate one day for a quick 1-hour clean (it shouldn't be that dirty if you've been cleaning as you go), or have different days designated for different things — vacuum the living room, for example, or wash the linens, etc.
5. Every few months, do a deep clean: clean out the refrigerator and oven, clear out the cabinets and clean them, etc.

### **Other Chores: A Simple System**

Besides cleaning your house, you probably have other chores you need to do on a weekly basis. It's good to get a weekly routine going as your simple system, so you never forget to do them and you know when you have to do what.

Here's a sample weekly routine:

- **Monday:** Yardwork
- **Tuesday:** Clean car
- **Wednesday:** Pay bills, update financial software
- **Thursday:** Errands, groceries
- **Friday:** Laundry
- **Saturday:** Clean house, put away laundry
- **Sunday:** Family Day

### **Errands: A Simple System**

Running errands throughout the week will stress you out, and cost you time and money. Here's a sample simple system for errands that works well for me:

1. Keep a running errands list, adding to it as you think of things, so when errands day comes, you know exactly what you need to do. Also keep a running grocery list.
2. The night before your errands day, you plan your dinner menu for the next two weeks and complete your grocery list, then look at all the errands on your errands list and plan out the most efficient route.
3. On Errands Day, you spend a couple of hours doing all the errands on your list and then buying all your groceries. One trip, planned efficiently, saves gas and multiple shopping trips.

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