

Resolutions Planner



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You'll never forget another birthday with our handy calendar.

HOME OFFICE

To create a multitasking yet visually appealing bookcase, try these tactics: Instead of pinning up loose papers, clamp together like items, such as dry-cleaning slips or concert tickets, with metal clips from an office-supply store. Choose ones with holes so you can hang them from tacks. Arrange reference materials in magazine holders labeled with titles and dates. Handsome boxes printed with transfer labels conceal manuals, warranties, and loose photos, while a wire in-box and mail sorter help manage day-to-day correspondence. Save space by placing a calendar in a blotter on your desk.

BOOKSHELVES

When it comes to arranging your books, it helps to know yourself. Books don't belong in trunks under the bed, or stuffed three deep on a shelf; most of us want them accessible. The trick is to respect your particular reading patterns and tastes.



Once the books are in the right locations, organizing them should be easy. You don't need the Dewey decimal system, and simple alphabetizing may be beside the point. Usually, it is better to organize by subject or category (nature, American history), and then either chronologically or alphabetically by author within the subject. Martha organizes her art books alphabetically by artist and subject matter, and the others by topic and then by author. It works. "I know where everything is," she says, "and I can always find the books I'm looking for." Others organize first by topic, then by size: tall to short, left to right.

Once they're organized, the care of books is straightforward. You should keep them clean; an old-fashioned feather duster will do the trick nicely. Once a year or so, take everything off the shelves, dust thoroughly, and vacuum. Don't subject them to extremes of heat or humidity. Dampness is the worst enemy of books, so if you think they might be getting mildewy, buy a dehumidifier, and keep it running. Be sure not to cram books too tightly on the shelves, or you will harm the bindings. If you have piles of books, don't stack them too high, and make sure to rotate the volumes so that no particular book is subjected to too much pressure. Rare books should be covered in paper or Mylar or, if they're fragile, kept in a specially made cardboard box.

SOCK DRAWER

A few organizational tricks will result in a tidier drawer. First, a drawer isn't necessarily the best place for socks; if your drawers are small, lining up plastic bins on a closet shelf may work better. If you do use a drawer, placing a sectioned plastic tray inside is an easy way to divide it. One idea is to sort socks by type (sports, casual, dress) and then place them in different compartments. That way, when you need to grab a pair of dress socks for work, there's no need to dig through piles of all kinds. Another smart way to stay organized is to start by buying several pairs of the exact same socks—they are easier to match, and with fewer choices, you won't spend as much time rummaging around in your drawer.



RECEIPTS

It's important to keep track of credit-card receipts so you can make sure your statements are correct, return products, or use warranties when necessary. At tax time, you'll need the information on hand to complete your return.

First, set aside a specific spot to collect receipts as soon as you get them, whether you're at the store or printing one out after an online order. You might tuck them immediately into a zippered plastic envelope that you keep in a purse or glove compartment.

If it's unrealistic to think you'll file all of your receipts regularly, place a decorative box or bowl in an accessible spot, such as a table in the entryway or a desk in your home office, where everyone can place receipts from their envelopes. Go through the bowl, throwing out or filing receipts as necessary, each time you receive your credit-card statement. Compare the transactions listed on the statements with your receipts. Then you can discard many of them. If you spot a discrepancy, keep the relevant receipts and contact the bank. Other receipts to hold on to include

those for items that can be returned or that have warranties. Also retain all credit-card receipts that you will need for your tax returns (usually for business expenses and charitable donations).

For filing, buy accordion folders or individual envelopes; label them by month, credit-card company, or categories, such as entertaining, transportation, and medical expenses (a good system for tax purposes). Whichever method you choose, always keep the newest receipts in front so they remain in chronological order.

REJUVENATE IN 20 MINUTES

In the rush of everyday life, you'll often find yourself racing from one event to the other, with next to no time in between. What can you do to refresh and rejuvenate in just 20 minutes? This quick routine can help you hit the reset button on body, mind, and spirit.



UNWIND

It's difficult to tap into your own energy resources when you're feeling tired. This simple exercise will help release the day's accumulated tensions and allow you to start over again.

PUT YOUR FEET UP

(5-7 MINUTES)

By reversing the effects of gravity and encouraging blood flow to the heart, this yoga pose helps clear the mind.

Sit with your left side touching a wall, legs outstretched. Shift your weight to the right, pivot your pelvis, lie back, and raise your legs. If you experience hamstring pain, inch your hips away from the wall a bit.

Let your arms relax at your sides, palms up. Roll the shoulders back to open up the chest. Take a deep breath, then exhale completely.

Spend five minutes in this position, or longer if you like, breathing deeply and letting go of the day's tensions.

ROLL OUT TENSION

(1 MINUTE)

This fun Pilates-inspired exercise is a great way to release back tension.

Sitting with hands on your shins or on the back of your thighs, knees tucked in to your chest and core engaged, exhale as you roll backward onto your spine, using your abdominals and momentum to roll back up again.

Begin to exhale on the way down and inhale at the top; find your natural rhythm.



INVIGORATE

Drawn from the practice of qigong, this exercise awakens your senses and lets you greet the evening with a renewed spirit.

PUMMELING

(2 MINUTES)

With a loosely closed fist, start lightly pounding your legs as if you're knocking on a door. This should be invigorating, not painful, as you stimulate the skin and muscles, releasing tension and increasing the flow of energy, or chi, through your body.

Pummel the bottoms of your feet, the inside and outside of each leg, your arms, the sides of your neck, upper back, chest, solar plexus, and belly. Don't forget the palms of each hand.

Reach around to get your buttocks, lower back, and kidney area, then move up to your shoulders and upper back.

QUICK DO-OVER

(10 MINUTES)

You don't have to replicate your entire morning routine to feel fresh and energized again. Consider a few shortcuts for a quick head-to-toe mood lift.

Give yourself a quick footbath. Less time-consuming than a full shower, a footbath can energize you from the bottom up. Sit on the edge of the tub and let the water run over your feet, or get a basin and soak your feet in warm, soapy water. Or, if you've spent the day on your feet and they feel sore, try a cool footbath rather than a warm one. For an extra lift, add a couple of drops of stimulating citrus or peppermint essential oil. Even better, massage your feet with a natural exfoliant containing coarse sugar or salt to help remove dull, rough skin and stimulate blood flow. Rinse your feet and pat dry; follow with a rich body butter or foot cream. Take a few moments for a mini foot massage, rubbing the soles of your feet to relax and stimulate the whole body.

Touch up your face and hair. Freshening up doesn't have to be a big ordeal. Simply mist your face lightly with water, blot dry, and reapply makeup basics such as blush and eyeliner, if you wear them. Spritzing your hair will also help activate any styling products you used this morning. Brush, floss, and you're ready to go.

Smile, even if you don't feel like smiling. Studies suggest that doing so may positively influence your mood. By projecting an image of positive energy, you'll find yourself feeling it inside as well.



SKIN CARE BASICS

It's never too late or too early to care for skin. Being mindful of lifestyle factors that affect it, and also selecting the right cleansers, moisturizers, and sunscreens, can help you do the job well.

MIND THE ELEMENTS

The daily environmental assault on skin starts with the morning shower. Hot water and soapsuds break down the epidermis's protective lipid layer, the barrier responsible for keeping moisture sealed in.

For this reason, experts advise showering for only as long as necessary and, if dry skin is a problem, using a creamy wash for the body. At bedtime, cleaning the face with a mild wash is a must for all skin types, to remove oil, makeup, and the day's pollutants.

Skin's cruelest enemy, however, is not dryness, but sun damage to epidermal cells, which results in a breakdown of collagen (a protein that gives skin structure), wrinkles, brown spots, and, potentially, skin cancer. This is why scientists agree that sunscreen is both a youth serum and a necessity. The most effective ones carry a sun protection factor, or SPF, of at least 30 and are labeled "broad spectrum," meaning they guard against aging UVA rays and burning UVB ones. (Both cause cancer.) Make sure a formula contains the UVA/UVB blocker zinc oxide.

Sunscreens and moisturizers spiked with antioxidants can help battle the effects of sunlight, as well as cigarette smoke, smog, and many other pollutants whose damage to skin cells can lead to dullness, sagging, and even skin cancer. Try topical products that include the antioxidants coenzyme Q-10 or lycopene (both available in over-the-counter products) or idebenone (available in some higher-end products at department stores).

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DIET

Antioxidant-rich foods may also help maintain the skin. Blueberries, pomegranates, red wine (in moderation), dark chocolate, and green tea may be especially beneficial for those concerned with wrinkles.

People with dry skin might increase their intake of omega-3 fatty acids (abundant in salmon and flaxseed), which increase skin cells' lipid content. Leafy green vegetables, sweet potatoes, cantaloupe, and other foods rich in vitamin A can help ease acne. So can foods that are good sources of zinc, such as turkey, pork, and shellfish.

EXERCISE & GET REST

Even the most exemplary diet will do little good if the blood can't properly deliver nutrients to the skin cells. Regular exercise, says Francesca Fusco, M.D., assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City, "increases circulation and helps the body eliminate toxins more effectively, so that skin looks less dull and under-eye circles are less obvious." What's more, an increase in heart rate gives the skin a rosy glow.

The corollary to such advice: Know when to stop moving and relax. "When you're tired, circulation is usually more sluggish, which is one reason the area under your eyes usually looks bluer," Fusco says. Skimping on sleep also prompts the body to secrete too much of the stress hormone cortisol, which slows the skin's immune system and ability to regenerate properly.

BUILDING STRONGER BONES

Bones are our pillars of strength, supporting our bodies and allowing us to withstand the bumps and bruises of daily life. Although they seem unyielding, bones are actually living, growing structures that need careful attention and maintenance. Many women are at risk for osteoporosis, a dangerous thinning of bones (osteoporosis literally means "porous bones") that can lead to fractures. While some risk factors such as ethnic background are fixed, others are modifiable, making this illness largely preventable. The best news? Even if you already have been diagnosed, it is possible to slow further bone loss and, in some cases, to build new bone.

KNOWING WHERE YOU STAND

Currently, the bone-mineral density (BMD) test, a form of X-ray that checks for bone-mineral loss, is recommended to only postmenopausal women unless other risk factors are present. The test, which typically costs a few hundred dollars, can be requested by younger women—and it's a smart way to get a baseline for monitoring future changes—but few insurance plans will cover it.

SMALL CHANGES, BIG RESULTS

Bone density peaks at about age 30, but there's plenty you can do at any age to protect your bones.

EAT AND DRINK WISELY

Our mothers were right: Calcium is key to forming and maintaining healthy bones. Dairy foods, nuts, leafy greens, blackstrap molasses, and fish with edible bones (such as canned sardines) are all good sources.

What you drink also can affect your bones. Some experts believe that the caffeine in coffee may cause calcium loss of about five milligrams per cup consumed; others warn against drinking carbonated sodas, since they often contain caffeine, as well as phosphorous, a mineral that may interfere with calcium storage. (Club soda and seltzer water, though, contain no phosphorous.)

If you find it difficult to get enough calcium from foods, taking a supplement is fine. Supplements also can be beneficial to women with existing osteoporosis. But choose the right one: Calcium carbonate, taken at meal-time to aid with absorption, is an excellent option for many women. (Check with your doctor before taking calcium supplements if you have a history of kidney stones.)

DON'T FORGET D

Without enough of the vitamin, our bodies can't absorb calcium and will steal it from bones. Vitamin D comes from two sources: sun exposure and diet. For many women, as little as ten minutes of normal outdoor activity on a sunny day is enough to spark production. Keep in mind, however, that this is sunscreen-free time, something that dermatologists warn increases the risk of skin cancer. Also, older women have fewer of the special cells that produce the vitamin in response to the sun. And in cloudier regions, time spent outside may not provide enough sun for skin-cell stimulation.

Unfortunately, there are few vitamin-D-containing foods, and most, including liver, eggs, and fortified milk and cereals, contain relatively low levels. Your best bet is a daily multivitamin; most contain the recommended amount. And if you're taking a calcium supplement or a calcium-rich antacid, make sure it contains vitamin D.

TONE YOUR BONES

Lifelong exercisers have stronger bones than sedentary women. The best bone-boosting exercises are weight-bearing ones—activities you do on your feet, with your bones supporting your weight. Walking is a good start, but racewalking or jogging will double the impact on your bones; skipping rope or playing tennis will improve bone mass even more dramatically.

Don't neglect your upper body, either: Osteoporosis fractures are common in the upper-back and shoulder regions, as well as in the wrists. By strength training—using free weights, weight machines, elastic bands, or other resistance devices—you can build up the muscles and bones in these areas. Strength training just twice a week is enough to get results.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

No single step will prevent osteoporosis, but several may. Even if you already have the disease, there are several promising medical treatments available. Although there isn't a cure, some medications, such as the parathyroid hormone, can stimulate new bone formation; others, such as calcitonin, can slow bone loss. Your doctor can tell you if there's a medication that is right for your particular situation.

FAMILY ORGANIZER

If one of your resolutions is to clean up all the sports equipment, bags, and shoes that seem to be constantly underfoot, here's how to keep it: Give each member of the household a sturdy metal storage bin. Slide the bins under a bench in the front hall or line them up in a mudroom. Use magnets and a photo to mark whose is whose—don't forget one for Spot.



EARRING ANCHORS

Instead of wasting valuable time every morning searching for backings or a match, keep your earrings together by threading pairs through the holes of spare buttons. Use a small dish to hold the buttons. This system will let you quickly zero in on just the pair you want.



PLAN-ANYTHING TAGS

Tailor a plain notebook to take on a major project with custom tabs. Using a bone folder, make creases across the middle of the stickers; just under the crease, label the category. Stagger and fold stickers over the edges of different pages. Or use two round stickers, back-to-back, for each section.



ROTATION REMINDER

For even wear and a longer life, a mattress should be flipped four times a year (alternating between end-over-end and side-over-side rotation). Hotels keep track by marking each end of a mattress: one says “January” (right side up) and “April” (upside down), the other “October” (right side up) and “July” (upside down). Whenever one of those months rolls around, adjust the mattress so that the appropriate month's name is right side up at the foot of the bed.

BIRTHDAY REMINDER CHART

If the cards you buy tend to be of the belated variety, this calendar will serve you well. Fill in names and birth dates of friends and family for each month. Fold the chart in half to show six months at once, and pin it to a bulletin board or hang it on the refrigerator. You can even shrink it and slip it into an address book. With a glance, you'll be reminded of important dates ahead of time.



