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What to do about Housework

Michigan State University

Cooperative Extension Service

Home and Family Series

Adapted by Lucile Ketchum, Specialist in Home Management from University of Vermont Brieflet 1094

June 1972

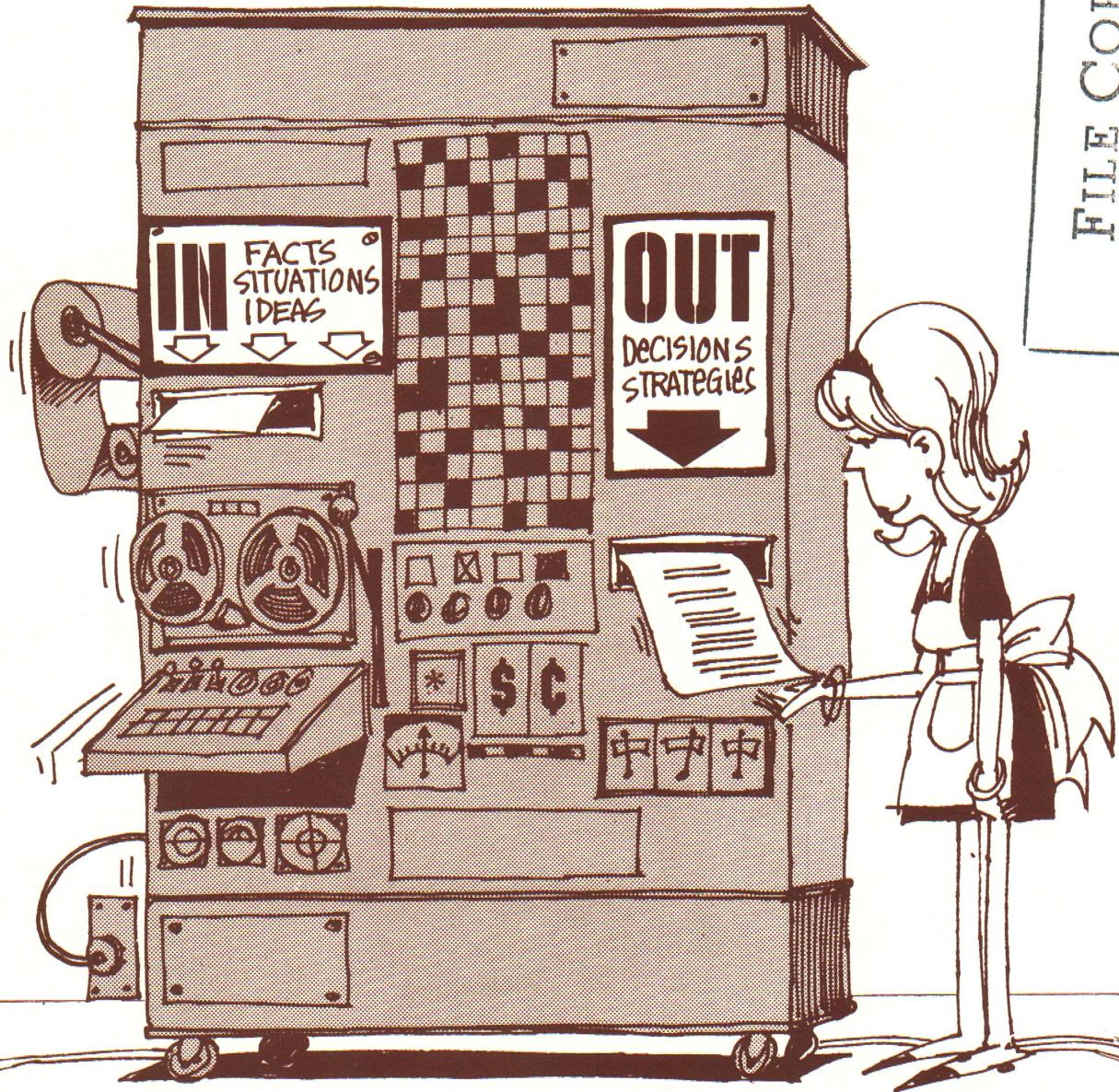
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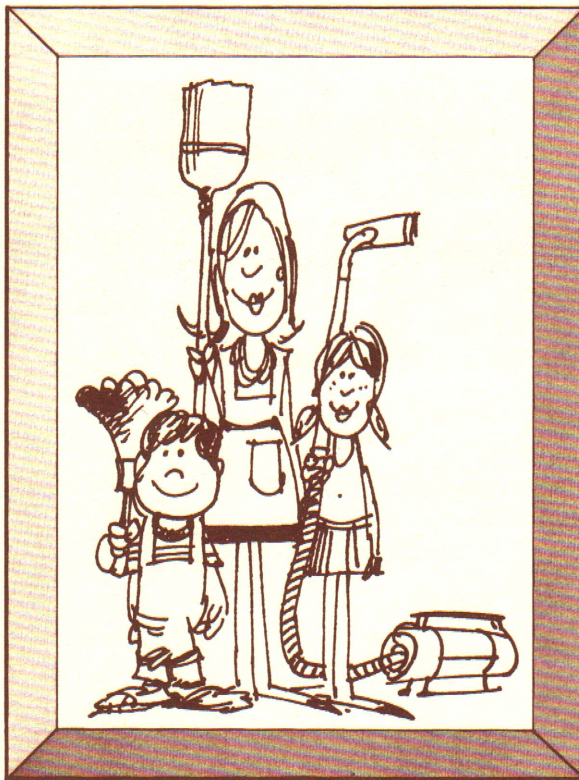


COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

WHAT TO DO ABOUT HOUSEWORK

Adapted by Lucile Ketchum, Extension Specialist in Home Management, M.S.U. from University of Vermont Brieflet 1094, of the same title, by Faith Prior, Family Economics and Home Management Specialist, University of Vermont.



PORTRAIT OF A HOMEMAKER

The M.S.U. Cooperative Extension Service expresses appreciation to the University of Vermont and to Faith Prior for their permission to adapt Brieflet 1094 for publication in Michigan.

Before you settle down to read this bulletin, take a few minutes to consider the possibilities for saving time and energy in your own housework and what this might mean to you. To help guide your thinking, fill in the blanks below.

I am a (full, part) _____ time homemaker. My job keeps me outside the house about _____ hours a day.

There are _____ adults and _____ children in the family; the oldest is _____ years old, and the youngest is _____. Our family has a special problem of _____.

Our home has _____ rooms. I wish there were (more, fewer) _____ rooms. I receive (much, some, little, no) _____ help from members of the family. I have (some, no) _____ outside help.

The job which hangs over me most heavily every week is _____ I think having _____ would be a great help to me in my housekeeping. The homemaking job I get the greatest satisfaction from is _____. My family seems most appreciative of _____; they seem least appreciative of _____.

If I had more time for myself I would _____.

From time to time you may wish to refer back to this quick analysis of your housekeeping problems, and see whether you can find some clues here to the mystery of creating those elusive commodities that we all seek—more TIME and ENERGY.

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. George S. McIntyre, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, E. Lansing, Michigan. 2P-20M-6:72 UL

1. MANAGEMENT IS THE KEY



No formula

One of the important things you can know about life—and this applies to your job as homemaker, too—is that *there is no magic formula* for success.

Separating the important from the unimportant is the closest you can come to a magic formula. This is management in its simplest form.

We all manage—some of us well, some of us badly—for management is just the process of using what you have to get what you want. Few of us have all we wish we had of any asset, whether it is time, energy, or money. It's how you handle what you do have that creates your satisfactions in life.

Being a good manager isn't easy. We sometimes build up a mental resistance to the very word "management." Why?

— *Because it's not easy to admit that you lack the ability to manage.* You sometimes hear people say without embarrassment, "I can't sew a stitch," or "I've never learned to drive." But, you may not like to admit that you can't manage your time or your money or your tasks.

— *Because management is a very personal thing,* involving you as an individual, your goals, and your ways of doing things. It involves your family too, and

you may be reluctant to lay yourself and your family open to criticism of your ways.

— *Because management patterns are always changing.* When you have learned how to make biscuits, and you follow the same recipe every time, you have predictable results. This is not true with management decisions. Family situations change, and what may have worked well on Monday may not work at all on Thursday; what was a good solution to the problem ten years ago may not fit the family needs at all today. Nevertheless, it's easier to go on doing things the way you have always done them.

But there are guides

Granted, management isn't easy. It's easier to talk about ways to save time, ways to save steps. But without an understanding of the principles of management, the subject of "time and energy saving" can easily turn into a series of household hints. Such tricks are interesting and even useful on occasion, but they are not the real basis for the kind of improvement that we are looking for.

We can take a page from the business manager's book. Businesses prepare "situation statements" as guides to management. A situation statement tells a business manager

what he already has, what he can get, and what he can hope to accomplish. Buildings, machinery, materials, capital, and even the time and talents of personnel are included in a situation statement.

It's not easy to look at your family in such a business-like way. It's hard to see your home and your children objectively; you stand much too close to them. Yet, in the introductory questionnaire, you made a brief situation statement. It tells how your family is different from every other family, not only on your street, but in the whole world. This is why there can be no magic formula . . . no standard plan for all households. You need—as your neighbor needs—a custom-tailored way of living that meets your own special requirements.



2. WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO WORK WITH?



Let's take a look at your situation statement. How might it compare with that of other homemakers, other families?

We all have certain assets — time, energy and money — in varying quantities. We also have our own knowledge and skills, which we can increase. And each of us has his own set of attitudes — perhaps the first assets to consider as you begin your situation statement.

What is the picture for you and your family? As you study your situation, you may discover “hidden gold”—assets you never thought of before.

1. Attitudes

Attitudes are like a wall. They can hem you in with feelings like “I've always done it this way,” “It doesn't really matter whether this gets done or not,” and “Nobody appreciates how hard I work.” But that same wall, once you get on top of it, can give you a fine, free view of your life, a view which makes it possible for you to think “Maybe there's a better way,” and “What really matters is what is important to us, not to our neighbors or our ancestors.”

Most of us are resistant to change, and this is sometimes good. If you have typed your letters using three fingers on one hand and two on the other for 30 years, a system you

picked up by yourself without benefit of any known method of typing, chances are it would be a mistake to change. You probably would never duplicate the speed and assurance the unorthodox method has given you.

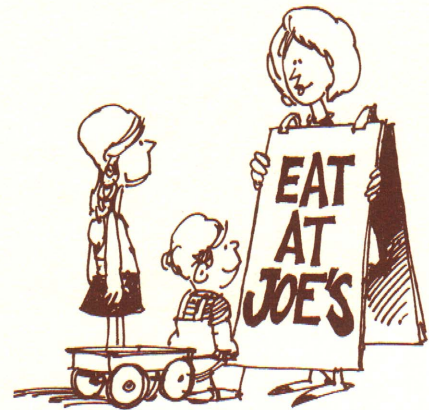
But, if you have always opened cans with a can opener that leaves a jagged edge, because it was the only kind of can opener available when you first ventured into the kitchen—don't refuse to try out the new electric one your family gave you for Christmas.

Ideas and ways of doing things are neither good *because* they are new—nor *because* they are old. They are good when they fit your needs.

Then there's the attitude that says “Ho Hum!” and “Oh dear, there's that miserable job I must do — someday.”

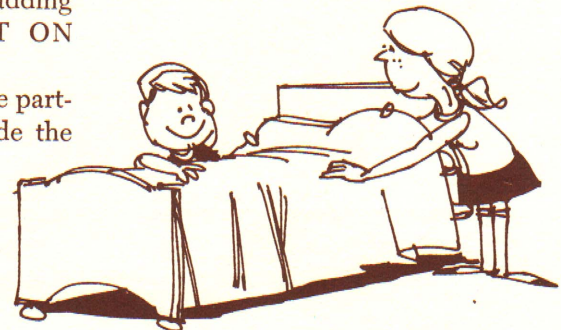
We have all seen people use more energy to resist a job to be done than the job itself would have required. Sometimes facing up to work and getting it under way is the hardest part of the whole task. So here is one suggestion for adding to your efficiency—GET ON WITH THE JOB.

So many women today have part-time or full-time work outside the



home that a whole new outlook on “homework” has come about. The good managers seem to get all the essentials done, keep their families clean, well-fed, and happy, and at the same time carry on their outside activities. They do not do this by simply adding one full-time job to another, for human energy and health have their limits.

They succeed by first taking a new look, and then deciding which standards of housekeeping are essential for the good of their families; which tasks can be eliminated; what equipment can free time for them. Sometimes they discover hidden talents in their husbands or children for certain tasks.



Even the daily activities for the homemaker not employed outside the home are very different from those of the housewife a generation or two ago.

How many hours does today's homemaker spend in chauffeuring the family, in volunteer work, in adult education? How much time does she spend computing income tax—a subject almost unknown to the homemaker thirty years ago? All these encroachments on "home-making" time mean that today's homemaker must be willing to investigate new methods, standards, and products that may help her stay "on top" of her job.

The truth is that the typical modern woman, far from living in the elegance that the advertising industry sometimes implies, cuts corners and makes compromises in order to get her work done. In short—she is a manager—as well as a household worker—an achievement of which she should be proud.

2. Ability and skill

These homemaking assets are like money in the bank. The greater the skill you can develop, the more time

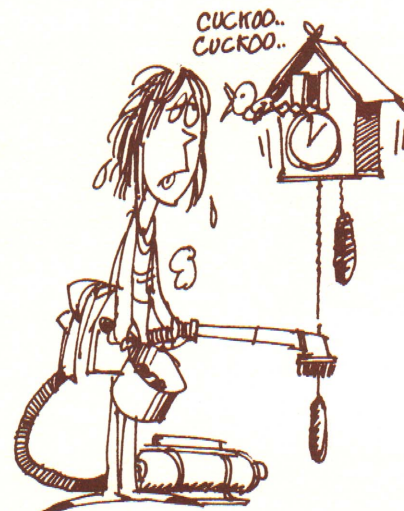
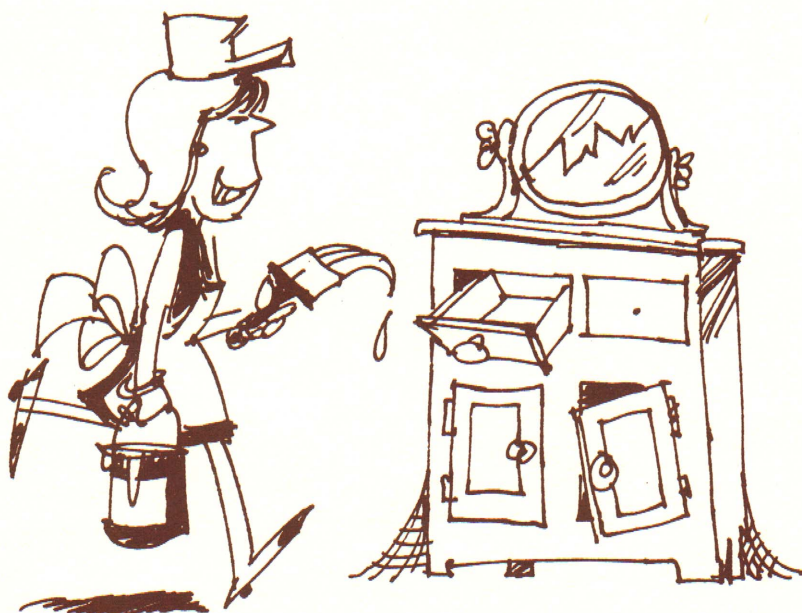
you may save at a job, and the less resistance you have getting started. Developing skill can often help you enjoy the jobs you once dreaded.

Some of the skills you develop may be creative; they may enable you to decorate a room, to paint and paper, to make draperies and slip covers. Such skills not only save money (at the expense of your time and energy, however), they also bring a positive reward in the pleasure of creativity.

Another kind of skill is "work simplification"—the development and use of easier and quicker ways of performing routine tasks. For example, stationing a movable utility table beside the refrigerator to save trips and frequent door openings is work simplification. The same is true of learning to make a bed in just one trip around it, without constant retracing of steps.

3. Time and energy

Certain people *seem* to have more hours in their day than others. A time-worn phrase advises us to give a job to the busiest person around, and he'll find a way to get it done.



Everyone has the same number of hours issued to him every midnight. But, the homemaker is seldom able to clutch these hours all to herself.

It's much more likely that she puts her hours into a big basket in the middle of the kitchen where every family member passing through is able to help himself to one of her hours, or at least a piece of it.

"Could you drive me to Little League? I'm late . . ." "I *did* want to wear the yellow blouse, but it's not ironed . . ." Or, even something as elementary as "My stomach hurts."

All of these, and many more, represent family members dipping into the homemaker's daily supply of time and energy.

But there can be an inflow as well—sometimes planned, sometimes from an unexpected source. When a five-year-old empties the waste baskets, he's just dropped a few minutes in your basket. A teenager may free an extra half-hour by scrubbing the bathroom. Or, you may buy a whole package of hours, to add to the family supply, by hiring someone to clean occasionally.

Whatever the situation at your home, there is a constant drain on time and energy. The more sources

you can find to contribute to the supply, the better your management is likely to be.

4. Money

Money is a scarce commodity — there is no doubt about that. Yet, in terms of saving time and energy, you might ask yourself, "Can money be exchanged for something I think is more valuable?"

The exchange is direct and ob-

vious in the case of a homemaker employed outside her home. She pays a babysitter, or someone to clean or iron in order to buy hours for working away from home.

Money can be exchanged for equipment to help you do your work more quickly with less energy expenditure. We tend to think of large appliances in this category — the clothes dryer, the dishwasher, the floor waxer. But, you might do well to give some thought to small

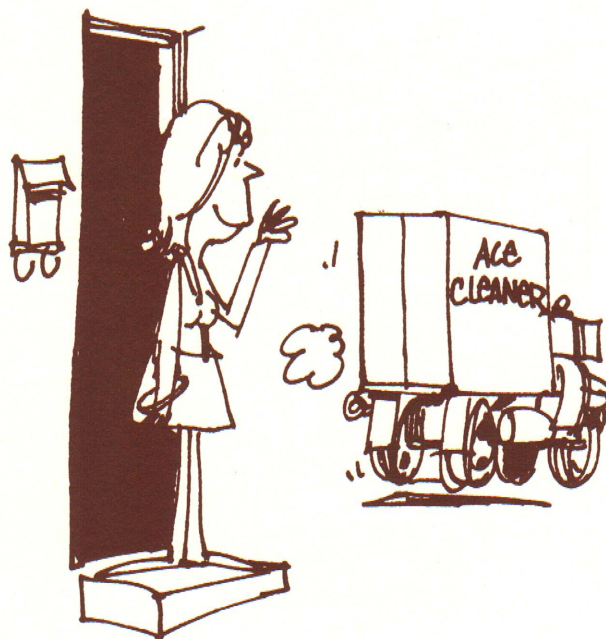
items which would simplify a job or avoid delays and petty annoyances. How about a second double-boiler? A duplicate set of measuring spoons (each to be stored where you use it)? A knife sharpener? A rack for storing cookie sheets and muffin tins?

Often the biggest stumbling block is seeing what the small (or large) annoyances are. The solution may be very simple and inexpensive.

INSTEAD OF THIS ...



THIS??





3. WHY DO YOU WANT TO SAVE TIME?



Why have you read this far, anyway? Is it because you live in a world where there is so much emphasis on speed that it seems almost unpatriotic not to be interested in saving time?

Or, are there things you want to do in the minutes and hours you hope to salvage from your busy life.

Look back at the questionnaire again.

The last line to be filled in says: If I had more time for myself I would what?

Read more? Spend more time on a garden? Sew? Do volunteer work at the hospital? Or maybe just get more rest, so that I can enjoy my family. . . . or become a more pleasant person, and they can enjoy me?

Planning ways to save time and energy is a little like teaching a child to save part of his allowance — it's always easier if he has a reason for saving.

Some jobs are fun!

Don't overlook the fact that some work is so satisfying in itself, that you ought to enjoy it in a leisurely way, as its own reward — ironing a little girl's dress to perfection, maybe; or sitting in the sun shelling peas; or putting some beautiful extra swirls in the chocolate icing. In a world too full of hurry, hurry, hurry — we all need to do some things just because we **LIKE** to do them, to do them in our own way and at our own speed.

For most of us, however, such jobs are work-luxuries. We must meet most of the demands of homemaking — or at least, of the housework part of homemaking — as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Standards are mental pictures of what is essential

Ways of performing household tasks, and the quality of the finished

product which we demand from ourselves, are dictated by the standards that we and other members of our family hold. To a degree, our standards are based on public opinion (or our belief about what public opinion is). We, and the way we live, are products of our times.

The mechanism through which standards are built into our thinking is habit formation. Once a mental pathway has been established, it is not easy to change. But the need to free time and labor in the household is a powerful stimulus for making a change. This need may be based on new responsibilities such as added family members, larger house and grounds, work outside the home, or a change in conditions — less household help, failing strength, or a physical handicap.

4. HERE'S HOW

Where does your energy go?

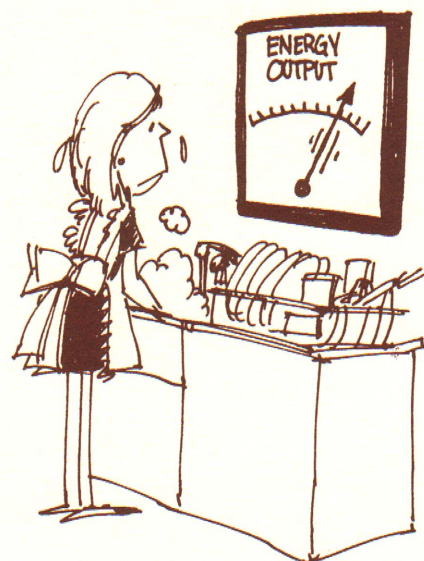
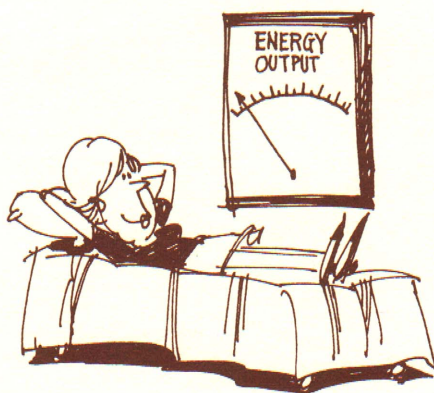
The least physically demanding activity one can have, while awake, is lying still. If this activity is taken as a basis for comparison, we find that it requires:

- 30% more energy to sit at rest
- 86% more energy to wash dishes
- 118% more energy to sweep
- 290% more energy to walk at about 3 miles an hour
- 372% more energy to walk down-stairs
- 1,336% more energy to walk up-stairs.

Researchers, however, find that expenditure of physical energy isn't the whole story in eliminating fatigue. Habit has some effect in your feeling of tiredness. It may be that, regardless of the amount of energy used, you find it less tiring to stand for washing dishes, ironing, rolling out dough, and similar jobs than to sit for them, especially if you aren't used to sitting to do these tasks.

You can, however, use your knowledge of energy and fatigue to develop rhythm in work to be done, to use momentum whenever possible, to use both hands at a job, to use feet or other parts of the body to relieve the hands and back, and to plan trips up and down stairs so that they count for as many purposes as possible. You can also arrange a comfortable place to sit for some jobs, and see if this may be restful for you.

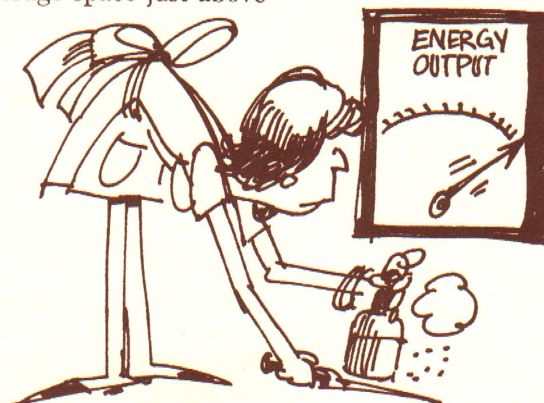
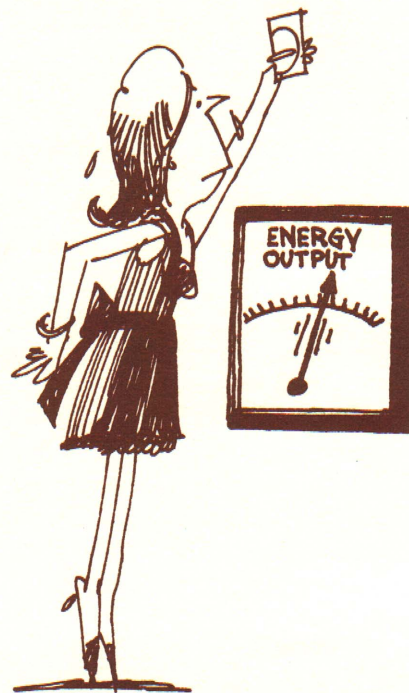
Varying amounts of energy are expended in bending and reaching. In considering where you should



store often-used equipment and supplies, keep in mind that:

1. Reaching to 46" requires least effort over standing still.
2. Reaching to 56" requires twice as much energy as reaching to 46".
3. Reaching to 72" requires four times as much energy as reaching to 46".
4. Bending to 22" requires five times as much energy as reaching to 46".
5. Stepping up 7" requires ten times as much energy as reaching to 46".
6. Bending to 3" requires eleven times as much energy as reaching to 46".

Are you making the best possible use of the storage space just above



counter level? Do you keep in this space the things you use most often, or is it cluttered with seldom used items?

Keeping house in spite of family

There's no doubt that many families today tend to be "messier" than those of their mothers or grandmothers, and some of the reasons are really out of our control.

Family members have more belongings — clothes, sports equipment, records, magazines, stuffed animals, and "junk." No previous generation has been able to own so many things. Clutter is often the result.

There is less time to keep things in order because we value taking part in community affairs, developing creativity, social contacts, etc., over keeping the house in apple-pie order. The boast "You can eat off my floor" is seldom the goal of housekeeping today.

Individual family members often operate on such tight schedules that when they claim "I'm too busy" or "I'm too tired," they may well be telling the truth.

A few suggestions:

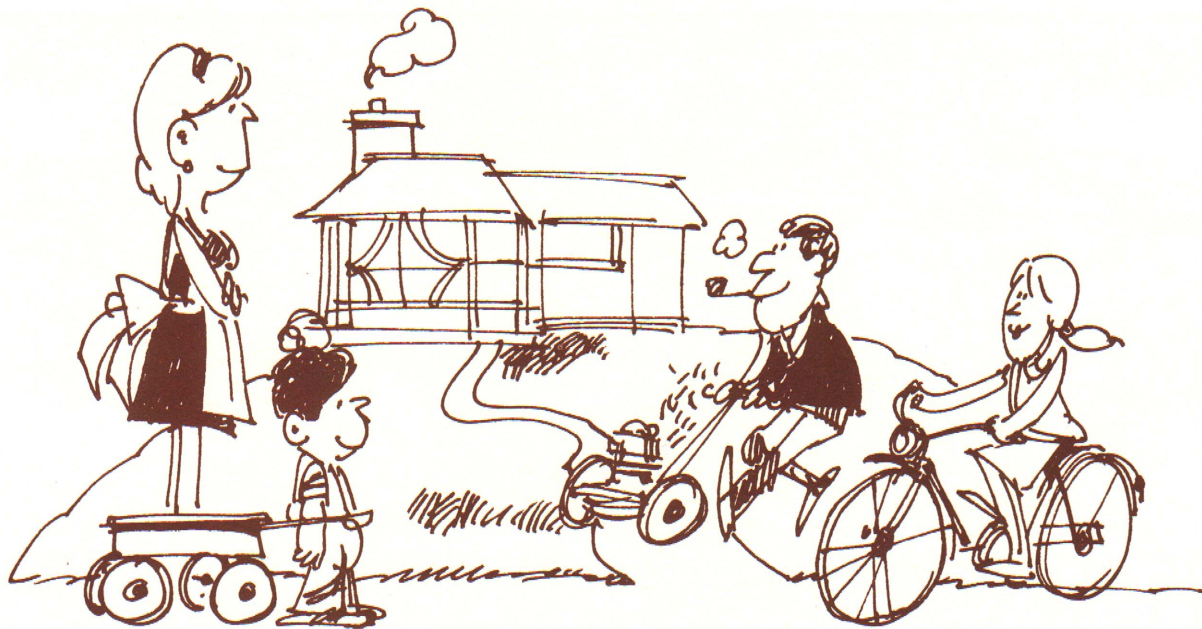
— Periodically, take time with youngsters to go through the possessions which last year meant so much to them, but which they may now willingly weed-out.

— Pack away, for the time being, collections which they may want to keep but are not willing to care for today.

— Consider swapping a heavy job like scrubbing the kitchen floor for some task which children consider tedious, like putting clean clothes away neatly.

— Try to provide sufficient, convenient and private storage space.

— Encourage young people to limit their activities to those which are really meaningful, thus easing the pressures of time and energy.



5. THE WHOLE JOB OF HOMEMAKING

Let's apply some of the principles we have been discussing, and see how they can be used to ease the demands of housekeeping.

Mary and Russell Wright, experts in the fields of design for both the home and industry, have worked out what they refer to as a "work-simplification catechism." Briefly, these are the questions they raise:

1. Question the job

Why do it? Does it contribute to your family's health, comfort, happiness? Measured against the expenditure of time and energy, does the task show a profit?

Who should do it? The housewife? Another member of the family? Hired help? Should it be done at home or by professional services?

When should it be done? (Out of this aspect of planning a schedule may be born.)

How should it be done? How meticulously? And by what possibly improved techniques?

2. Question the set-up

This involves selecting the best tool or material with which to work, and pre-positioning — storing tools and materials at the place and position most convenient to their use. (This is usually the place where you will start the job.)

3. Question the tools

Choose tools carefully to get the most out of them, and to suit your own ways. Beware of appliances which require more labor before and after use than they save. Stores are full of wonderful tools and materials, but buy critically and experimentally. Which ones will truly be useful? Which are for eye-appeal? Or prestige-appeal? How often will you use a tool or gadget — in relation to the storage space it will fill?

4. Question the working conditions

Industry long ago took note of fatigue factors which affect a work-

er's efficiency — light, ventilation, temperature, order instead of clutter — and went on to consider the value of pleasant colors, elimination of glare and noise, the effect of music. These are often neglected conditions of work in the home, along with consciousness of efficient dress, freedom from anxiety and insecurity, and the satisfaction of knowing that the housewife's job demands skill and competence.

Your home is something else again. You *live* in your home, and you must weigh the value of the things that go into it. You alone can estimate labor in proportion to happiness and comfort. Eliminate trimmings that give little return for your care, and concentrate on those things which have real value for you.

As homemakers, we can learn some things about management from industry, but your home is not a small industry, you are not a production engineer — or at least,

not with production as an end in itself. For you, management is more concerned with securing maximum satisfaction and happiness for your family than strictly utilitarian use of time.

Remember who you are keeping house for. Not the neighbors, long-gone ancestors, editors of women's magazines, but your real, live, flesh and blood family. They would rather have *YOU* with a smile than a mere *HOUSE* like a furniture ad. Surely you want your home to provide an orderly and pleasant background for your family, but keeping it that way is a *means*—not an *end in itself*.

SOME TRICKS of the TRADE



Which Ones Are for You?

Let's take a tour of the house and see where we might trim away some of the excess housekeeping. Like any visit, this one begins . . .

In the Yard

Be sure there's a clean area to pass through before reaching an entrance. Paving a muddy or gravelly spot with brick, flat stones, cement or asphalt eliminates a good deal of tracking.

- Is there a wiping mat at every entrance?
- Accessible storage for outdoor toys?

Halls and Coat Closets

Paint closets white inside; a latex-based paint covers well.

Provide light at the bottom as well as the top.

Plan storage to be within the reach of children. Label hooks or hangers as done at nursery school.

Provide bins or shelves for rubbers and boots built with screen bottoms through which dirt and water can fall into a tray. Or, make a rack with pegs of varying heights on which boots can be stored upside down to dry.

Keep gloves and mittens in a long, shallow, partitioned drawer or, hang on a miniature clothes line inside the closet door. Consider tearing out the door and extending the opening of a closet which is too small to walk into (if it's not a supporting wall). Sliding doors, double doors, folding doors, draperies, vertical or horizontal bamboo curtains are all possibilities for the wider opening.

Consider putting a big sheet of pegboard on a wall in the back hall to hang sports equipment for easy access and replacement.

Have a central rack or board for hanging keys and label the keys with sturdy tags.

At the Telephone

Hang a large calendar for recording future commitments. Get your whole family into the habit of using it.

Keep a list of frequently-called numbers taped to the telephone table or inside the drawer.

Tie a mechanical pencil or ballpoint pen to the phone and tape down the pad, perhaps to the front of the phone book.

Miscellaneous Clutter

Have a general storage area, such as basement shelves, for the miscellany you may want shortly, but not right away. Vertical window shades close them off nicely.

Have a central place for unclaimed clutter—a chest, or deep drawer, or cupboard. When claimant appears, let him dig it out. Clean the cache only when you are feeling very strong.

The Living Room

Use draw draperies in place of hard-to-clean Venetian blinds. Patterned, light, smooth, draperies show less dust than plain, dark, and deeply textured ones.

Put glass on window sills or table tops where you keep plants.

Use dust cloth in each hand.

Use your vacuum brush for dusting, and replace or clean the bag often for efficiency.

Light finishes show less dust than dark woods.

Push or pull rather than lift when rearranging furniture. When you do lift,

stand close to the object, feet about twelve inches apart; then bend your knees and keep your back straight. Lift gradually by straightening the legs, using leg and shoulder muscles instead of back.

Have casters, rollers, or domes under heavy pieces of furniture for ease in cleaning.

Be sure lighting is suitable—adequate and of proper quality—for activities.

Wet down the ashes in the fireplace before cleaning so they won't fly.

Provide convenient storage for records, books, magazines. They'll have a better chance of being put away.

Take five minutes to put the living room in order (not necessarily clean) the last thing at night.

At the Desk

Arrange a business center in your home, if you don't already have one.

Organize family business and personal papers so that they can be located without frustration and wasted time.

Keep desk supplies available at the business center.

Keep wrapping supplies—stout paper, twine, tape, labels in one place.

Print the family Social Security numbers with a flow pen inside a desk drawer.

Kitchen-Dining Area

Market once a week, if possible, on a day and at an hour when stores aren't too crowded.

Use a shopping list. Arrange it by stores and by areas within stores.

Have a shelf, rolling table, or some other space for putting groceries to sort them for storage.

Store current supplies of canned goods as close to the place where you will use them as possible; reserves might be on shelves alongside cellar stairs, or on narrow shelves with raised edges built inside closet or pantry door.

Have a large, sturdy, lazy-susan built into a corner base cabinet to hold a multitude of cans and packages, and to bring them in sight at a touch.

Don't store things in the refrigerator that don't need to be kept there.

Get in the habit of cleaning and trimming fresh produce before putting it away.

Keep a week's supply of potatoes handy to the sink.

Have duplicates of small equipment which is used often. Store each near the place of use. For example, keep salt and pepper sets or wire beaters near sink and range.

Cut several layers of shelf and drawer papers at one time; just remove the top one when you clean.

Use kitchen shears for snipping parsley, chive — lots of things. Tie them down so they will stay.

Use tongs for lifting hot foods, pulling pans to front of oven.

Use cupcake papers to save cleaning regular muffin pans.

Keep plenty of good containers with covers, for putting away leftovers. Don't store little dabs in big bowls. Use them up promptly.

Use terry-cloth dish towels — they don't have to be ironed and make excellent cleaning cloths when worn out.

Be sure all kitchen equipment is in good repair; loose handles, badly fitted covers, chipped or dented pans are time and temper wasters.

Keep often-used utensils and appliances in easy-to-reach places. For example, coffee supplies near the stove or sink (depending on whether you make drip, percolator, or instant coffee), double boiler near the sink. "Where do I use it first?" should determine storage.

Take a look at the clutter that collects in kitchen drawers. One solution is to remove everything in a drawer to a box, return to drawer or hang-space as actually used. Get rid of the rest, or at least store in less valuable space.

Soak cooking dishes while you're eating. Hot water for greasy or sugary foods, cold water for flour, eggs, or milk. Add a dash of detergent to either for real soaking power.

Plan meals ahead when time is at a premium. Then you can go ahead quickly to prepare a meal without spending time inspecting supplies, deciding what to prepare, going or sending to the store for last-minute items.

Plan your meals and market order at the same time.

Defrost the refrigerator just before the large shopping trip.

Exploit time savers in the meal-planning department — one dish meals, canned foods, company meals for an emergency shelf, frozen foods, oven meals — all used with discretion to avoid blandness and monotony.

Let guest meals be simple and good. Save elaborate menus for times you just feel like pampering your family.

Look for new storage places if you can't reach knives without taking a step.

Have slot storage for cookie sheets, muffin pans, platters, and so on near the range. Vertical dividers on a deep shelf do the trick.

Make sure covers on toasters, mixers, etc., aren't harder to clean than the appliance itself.

Remember that different foods with the same food value can save time in preparation — scrambled eggs instead of a soufflé or omelet, drop biscuits (or square biscuits (instead of painstaking-cut rounds).

Set the breakfast table the night before.

Find the most comfortable work height and position for each job, whether it's paring potatoes or caring for the baby.

Check your cleaning supplies. Be discriminating and have only the one brand of each product you like best.

Carry small cleaning supplies from room to room in a basket. Don't unpack between cleanings.

Keep a set of small tools (hammer, screw driver, pliers) in the kitchen. Lock them up if necessary.

The Bathroom

Keep a bottle of liquid detergent, or a pretty jar of a mild granular detergent near the tub. Teach the family to add a capful to the tub, to prevent a ring.

Make a quick daily "swish" to prevent a big cleaning job.

Get a large enough hamper. Better still, could you make a laundry chute? (Sometimes a closet or cupboard floor lines up just right.)

Put name labels, if necessary, over each towel rack.

Have different color towels and washcloths for each family member to make it easier to identify a culprit.

Determine if paper cup dispenser or paper towel rack which save time and energy are worth the money to keep refilled. Which is most important at this moment in your life — time or money?

Install window shades to roll up from the bottom for greater privacy.

Bedrooms

Place casters or rollers on the bed to make cleaning easier.

Must you turn the mattress every week? Occasionally should do.

Eliminate the mattress cover and put your new vacuum cleaner to work.

Replace blankets and comforters with a single, electric blanket to speed bed-making if this fits your budget.

Have school-age children make their own beds, to leave you more time for other work.

Use mitered, contour corners to keep bedding neat.

Use partitions, or coverless boxes to help keep bureau drawers in order.

Roll small items (panties, girdles, T-shirts). Takes up less room and makes inventory easy.

Remember that double decker beds are hard to make.

Get rid of poor hangers. They're hard on your temper and bad for your clothes.

Install adjustable height clothes bars in children's closets to encourage independence, self reliance and the habit of hanging up clothing.

Designate place for junk for children — a drawer, chest, box, etc.

Put a stop on bureau drawers so children won't pull too far and dump the contents.

Laundry

Let the experts do some of your worrying. Tell the drycleaner that spot is coffee, or pin a label to the spot.

Rub a few drops of liquid shampoo into grimy collars.

Use a sleeve board for touch-up or sewing jobs to save energy you would use getting out the big ironing board.

Have a rack for hanging fresh ironing.

Stand on a rubber mat while ironing.

Save your back and put the basket on a waist-high table or cart when hanging clothes.

Use press-on tape to mend many items. Question mending really old sheets at all.

Don't iron towels, underwear, pajamas, or sheets, unless it's really important to you. Then, look for shortcuts — such as ironing only the top third of the sheet.

Teach both boys and girls to press and iron. Home is the place to practice (and it helps with the laundry, too).

Some All-Around-the House Thoughts

Keep up to date on labor-saving products and devices — but don't be afraid to say "This one doesn't work for me." If at all possible, try out expensive equipment before you buy. Get information from an unbiased expert before you buy. If a major investment, look for information from several sources.

Don't let your conscience require you to do-it-yourself, when somebody else can do it better. That "somebody else" may be your child or your husband — or a paid worker — or a commercial "service."

Enlist other family members in the work of making a home. Written assignment, perhaps on a calendar, avoids arguments.

Do big jobs like cleaning the basement, in stints — half an hour today, half an hour tomorrow. Set a timer to remind you to stop.