

Oftentimes the demands and challenges of keeping the family schedule seem insurmountable. However, if you break tasks into manageable pieces and find an organization system that works with the unique needs of your family – the chaos can be controlled. Below are some tips from the planning experts at MeadWestvaco to help families get everyone on the same page – and keep them there.

Tips for Keeping a Family Organized

- Use color as an organizational tool. Assign everyone in the family a color and use it whenever possible, not just for keeping items on the calendar. Purchase folders, cups, toothbrushes, hair brushes, laundry baskets, towels, suitcases, etc. in each member's color. At the start of the New Year, allow members a chance to trade colors if they are interested.
- Encourage kids to get involved in the organization process. Teach them to check the family calendar, properly file their school papers, check for messages, etc. Color coding helps even preschoolers participate and starts good organizational habits early.
- Start a yearly [calendar](#) and write in all of the appointments, birthdays and other events you already know about. Update it as needed and post the calendar as part of a message center that all family members can easily see. Choose an [Academic Year calendar](#) if you prefer to start fresh at the start of the school year or a [Regular Year calendar](#) that begins in January.
- Keep a comprehensive family calendar to help avoid timing conflicts. It's easier to juggle meetings, play dates and other events when you can clearly see who needs to be where and when, without checking five separate sources.
- Update, consolidate and edit the family calendar at the start of each month so as the page turns it includes the most up-to-date information for everyone.
- Try not to over schedule yourself or your kids. If you need to, schedule downtime at least once a week and make it known that nothing else can be scheduled in this time slot.
- Identify your most common time wasters and look for ways to organize around them. If you're looking for the car keys each morning, make a [key hook](#) and use it. If you are always forgetting your lunch in the refrigerator, leave yourself a reminder on the door handle or your car mirror.
- "A place for everything and everything in its place." Don't limit organization to your calendar. Designate places for all the common sources of everyday clutter – [mail](#), [school papers](#), [newspapers](#), [magazines](#), etc.
- Set aside a bit of time each day to return things to their proper places in each room. When each family member is assigned a room, taking care of small chores regularly will help to minimize large cleaning jobs later.
- Keep [a list on the refrigerator](#) to keep track of grocery items that run out throughout the week. This will avoid guesswork and multiple trips to the store.
- Communicate change. Changes to busy family schedules are inevitable. Devise the best way for your family to communicate these changes so there is no confusion or missed appointments. Whether it is a centrally located [erasable message board](#) or a sticky note system, make sure everyone knows how to spread the word throughout the family.
- To prepare for the day ahead, set out items needed the night before. This will cut down on morning confusion and allow everyone to prepare quickly for the day ahead.