



A Quickstart Guide to GTD for Moms

by Mystie Winckler

What does it mean to be organized?

In *The Complete Guide to Getting and Staying Organized*, Karen Ehman defines “organized” simply as “being prepared” and I think that really does sum up the purpose of our efforts.

One thing to keep in mind as you begin organizing (perhaps for the hundredth time) is that it isn’t a task that happens all at once and is then complete. As you use your system, you’re going to see ways to improve it, so tweak it as you go and don’t get bogged down in setting it up “perfectly” from the outset.

What is GTD?

GTD is short for *Getting Things Done*, a time management classic by David Allen, in which he explains how to set up a a system to deal with all the stuff of life and achieve “stress-free productivity,” which he defines as a sense of “relaxed control” through “natural planning” processes.

“Anxiety,” he claims, “is caused by a lack of control, organization, preparation, and action.” He posits that most people know how to plan and they know what to do, they just don’t do it. So his book is a step-by-step coaching towards doing systematically what is usually only done haphazardly or in crises.

Getting Things Done is about managing your stuff and your actions so that your mind is free and clear to focus on the present moment with your family. It all comes down merely to consistently applying common sense, rather than only resorting to these practices when crunch time hits. We can do that. It will take time and practice, but we can do that.

My ebook *GTD for Homemakers* more fully explains the complete GTD system, applying it and making it practical for home and family life, but this booklet is intended to give you

the essentials, the shortcut to minimizing chaos and anxiety, to bring you to a place where you can have the time in your day and space in your mind to even think about a more complete system like the one outlined in *GTD for Homemakers* and *Paperless Home Organization*.

Create the Three Vital Containers: Inbox, Calendar, Daily List

An inbox, calendar, and daily list, kept in a reliable and consistent manner, eliminates mental distraction and overload, so that our minds are freed from holding multiple random reminders and details. Then we can be present in the moment and make appropriate moment-to-moment decisions.

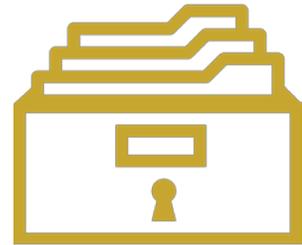
You already have inboxes, but you might not realize it and thus not manage them effectively. An inbox is where stuff or notes go before being processed.

Ideally, your inbox(es) are emptied at least once a day or every other day, but

honestly, getting it done weekly is more than adequate. Your email inbox is one sort, and your purse might be an on-the-go stuff-receptacle, but you need an intentional, convenient place in your home for paper-and-things-to-deal-with to collect.

Then, when you go to put details into your calendar or notes, you know where to look. This will save so much time and stress because an important paper might be any number of places.

You probably also have a calendar already, but a few simple rules will make it much more effective. The calendar is not a place to keep to-do lists or notes. Calendar space should be guarded, honored space. Only add to the calendar what truly must happen that day or at that specific time. Your calendar should show you the “hard lines” of the day, not any wishful thinking



about what you hope will happen that day. In addition to not being cluttered with hopes and dreams, the calendar must also have every commitment on it if you are going to trust it and let go of holding appointments in your active mind.

Make sure your calendar is portable and accessible and that it is always handy. A wall calendar will not help you make an appointment at the doctor's office or check your availability for a dinner invitation while at church. **Keep a calendar, keep it up to date, and keep it with you.**



No matter how many times you've tried and been frustrated by it in the past, you will be well served if you learn how to keep a useful daily to-do list. Experiment until you find a way that works for you and that appeals to you. I now use an index card and list the day's work that simply must be done (for me, my "work" is homeschooling), list the habit or routine I'm trying to learn, and then have 1-3 other tasks or goals I want to try for that day, whether it's schedule a dentist appointment, write a letter, or organize the coat closet. I limit myself to 1-3 things to add to my day, because even that can be unrealistic.

You can watch a video where I demonstrate and talk about my index card system more fully at [*Simplified Organization: The Daily Index Card.*](#)

Declutter Your Mind

Start a list of everything that is on your mind, everything that is not as it should be. If it pops into your head, write it down, no matter its importance. Simply gather data and get it out of your head, onto paper (or into bytes). If you don't get everything out of your head and onto paper (or a physical thing into a physical

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inbox). Once you start, you will likely be amazed both at the volume of the ideas, obligations, and data your mind is holding onto. Let it out, and you will also be surprised at the creativity that will open up to you as to how to handle what you've been stressed about. You'll see connections you couldn't when your mind was so busy holding on to things that it couldn't process them.

In addition to going through a brain dump whenever you feel scattered or overwhelmed, learn the habit of “ubiquitous capture.” Capture on paper, voice memo, or digitally every “I need to ____” “I might want to ____” or any other “value-added” thoughts about anything you have going on. This will relieve your mind's stress on not losing those thoughts, which you might not even be aware of, but which will wear you down and block your creativity, resourcefulness, and productivity.

Implement the 3 Vital Reviews

Sure, a major mind-dump and organizational purging reduces mind-bloat and brain-fog, but it is review that keeps them from reappearing. Consistently reviewing, at key times, is how to maintain trust in your lists, so they are effective and you are focused. **Make a list and look at it.** That's the biggest lynchpin in any organizational effort or system.

You simply must set aside time for a daily review. Typically it is done in the morning before the day begins, but if you are a night person, you might find it most effective to plan for the coming day the night before. Daily, though, you need to review your calendar and task lists. If you have routine checklists or a daily schedule, perusing it for a minute in the morning might help keep them forefront in your mind so that you follow through throughout the day. This is also the time you make your daily to-do list mentioned in the first section.

The weekly review is really the key to GTD-magic. The weekly review will sharpen your intuitive focus on your important projects as you deal with the flood of new input and potential distractions coming at you the rest of the week. During this time, update your lists, do a brain-dump, process your inboxes, and generally evaluate how things went and what needs to be done next week. Look at your past calendar, transfer anything you need, look at what's coming up for the next week and the next month, jot down any notes the overview inspires. You will be able to function in that space of "calm self-control" if you know you have time set aside to get things aligned again as they will inevitably fall prey to entropy during the week.



Finally, set up a bigger-picture review and planning session at intervals that make sense in the rhythm of your life. You need to occasionally step back and set bigger goals, prepare for bigger events, or just get a grip on what life has thrown at you. The length of time doesn't really matter; sometime more than a month but at least every semester or 6 months. We do six week terms for our homeschool, so I plan in 6-7 week chunks. However your life naturally breaks, use those times to evaluate what you should be focusing on.

If you have a sense of where you are and where you're going and what you have going on, you'll be able to make better on-the-spot decisions every day about commitments and responsibilities and ideas that are always bombarding you.

Making It All Work

With your lists and containers in place and reviewed, you can maintain “operational intensity” and effective relaxed control. You can do the next thing, making good choices moment by moment as life happens because this process and system clarifies your mind and your intuition. It is not a system that demands that you be slave to a to-do list. Stinky diapers, broken glass, a disobedient child do not fit onto to-do lists. The nature of our responsibilities requires we be able to handle what comes at us as the days roll. We know this, but get stuck thinking that having a system or a schedule will prevent us from being free to handle such situations, when it actually frees us for them, if we use them as tools and not masters.

Expand and Improve This Process with *GTD for Homemakers* and *Paperless Home Organization*.

If you found this process helpful and you're ready to take it to the next level and improve your productivity and your home managing systems even more, check out my other full ebooks:

GTD for Homemakers will walk you through decluttering your mind and your house in an even more thorough brain-dump and examination. You will learn how to set up all the inboxes and other containers you need for managing your thoughts and your stuff, and you'll learn how to use the lists you make to actually help you get done what must be done.



[GTD for Homemakers](#)

Because mothers have so many details to manage, GTD for Homemakers applies business management principles specifically to our lives as mothers at home, so we can be more present and flexible in the moment.

Price: \$4.99

[Add to cart](#)

Paperless Home Organization takes you step-by-step through setting up a home management binder, but digitally, making your smartphone or tablet an organizational tool (no data plan required) rather than just a way to text people and check Facebook. The book contains lots of screenshots and holds your hand through the entire process.



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Take the thinking out of the whole dinner cycle of planning, shopping, and cooking, even if your family is gluten and/or dairy free!

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Quickstart Guide to GTD for Moms



Set up 3 Containers

1. An intentional inbox
2. An accurate calendar
3. A daily to-do list



Declutter your Mind

- Do a thorough brain-dump to clear your mind for action.
- Instill the habit of ubiquitous capture.



Leverage 3 Reviews

1. Daily
2. Weekly
3. Occasionally

Go forth and do the next thing, making good choices moment by moment as life happens because you have clarified your mind and your intuition through this process.

*Get the guide free at
simplifiedorganization.com.*

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