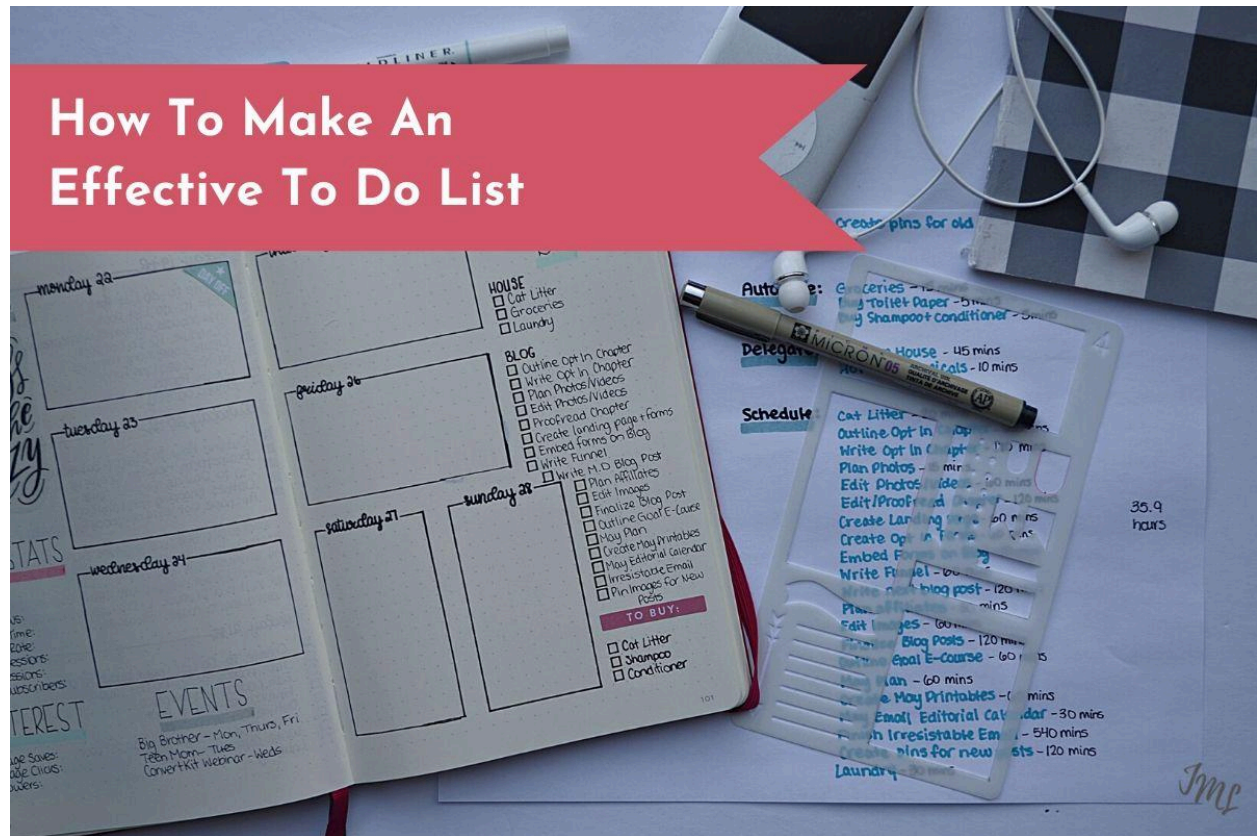


A Complete Guide On How To Make A To Do List

Taken from Keri at *Journaling My Life*

<https://www.journalingmylife.com/a-complete-guide-on-how-to-make-a-to-do-list/>



Accomplishing your daily goals and staying productive is one of the biggest challenges we all face daily. With our attention being split in so many directions, it can be overwhelming to try and stay on top of absolutely everything. Added to that, we spend so much of our time trying to figure out what to do next, or what we need to get done first that we end up wasting valuable time that we could have been using to complete a task. So, what is the best way to be **productive** while staying **focused and on track**?

To-do lists.

To-do lists are one of my favorite productivity hacks. They are easy to create, simple to follow, and will keep you focused on the most important things. And you might already be making to-do lists...

BUT, are you making to-do lists correctly?

Do you feel bogged down by your to-do lists?

Do you feel like you are constantly trying to keep up to your list, desperate to not migrate anything over to the next day?

Are you rushing your tasks, just so you can check items off your list?

If you said yes to any of those questions, then you still have room to improve on your list-making skills!

An overwhelming to-do list is not the answer to productivity.

Thankfully, I have created the perfect list making strategy that will help you **take control** of your to-do list, **accomplish more in less time**, and get everything done **without skipping corners!**

Step One: Brain Dumping

In order to create an effective to-do list, we need to **write down everything we want to accomplish**. This will allow you to see all these tasks in one place, leaving you with a clear mind.

You can do this step in your Bullet Journal or Planner, but personally, I prefer to do it on a separate sheet of paper. This allows me the freedom to be messy and not focus on the organization aspect just yet.

You are simply going to write down every task you can possibly think of that needs to be done. And I do literally mean every little task that is on your mind. This can include getting groceries to writing a novel and everything in between. If it is something that is going to require your time, write it down!

Step Two: Referencing Your Calendar

Before you quit your brain dump, take a quick look at your calendar! Are there any meetings, appointments, events or activities you have to prepare for? Add it to your list!

Step Three: Categorize

Now that you have a complete list of everything that you need to get done, you can begin to categorize everything. The four categories you are going to use are...

1. **Eliminate**
2. **Automate**
3. **Delegate**
4. **Schedule**

If you look closely at these categories, you'll notice that three of the four categories involve us not doing the task we have written down (or at least making it easier for us)! This is going to be the key in making your to-do list actually do-able!

I think it is safe to say we are all **guilty of saying yes to too many things**, which **results in overwhelm and burnout**. We aren't often able to recognize that we have too much on our plate until we are in the moment and falling behind. This process will help you identify any potential problems in your weekly plan so that you can come up with a plan that will ensure everything is taken care of without killing yourself in the process.

Let's break down each of the categories further so that you know how to categorize your own list.

Eliminate

When you go through each item on your brain dump list, I want you to **ask yourself, can I eliminate this?**

I am extremely guilty of putting too much on my plate when I just don't have time! Some of these things may be extremely unnecessary, or just don't need to be done right now.

When you do this step, be brutally honest with yourself. Does this item need to be done right now, or can it wait until a later time? If the answer is yes, write it down under this category.

Automate

Automation is the use of systems, tools or services that will reduce the amount of time spent on a task, or eliminate it altogether.

This category might be a little bit more challenging as you will need to brainstorm ways to streamline certain things before you add them. But the goal is to find ways you can cut down on the amount of time spent on a certain task. I have included some examples below that might help you come up with some cool ways that you can set things in your life on auto-pilot!

1. **Grocery shop online!** This can save you time in a couple of different ways. For one, you won't be spending a bunch of time actually going grocery shopping. Simply pick up the items, and you will be on your way! Secondly, you can save master shopping lists that can be automatically re-ordered.
2. **Create a daily to-do list!** There are certain things that you likely do every day, like making your bed. Rather than writing that down every day, create a daily to-do list that you can follow. This will save you time in your planner, and routines are a great way to automate your mornings and evenings!
3. **Use Grammarly to proofread your writing!** Let some of the amazing online tools do the heavy lifting for you! This particular tool will read your notes, your emails, your essays, and suggest grammatical and spelling changes for you! This is an amazing time-saving tool.
4. **Use templates wherever you can!** Do you find yourself replying to the same email over and over again? Write out some simple email responses that you can simply copy and paste! This is just one idea of how templates can make your life a little bit easier!

Delegate

Do you struggle to relinquish control? I know I do! This one is going to force you to practice doing just that, and it is the best thing in the long run! **You are only one person, and you don't have time to do everything!** It is okay to ask for help, even if you know you can do it better!

If you just don't have time to bake for your kids' bake sale, find someone in your family who would be willing to help, or hire someone to do it! There is no shame in not being able to do everything yourself!

Schedule

Finally, everything left on your list will be the stuff you have to schedule.

The reason I leave this category to the end is so that you are only left with the items that can't be eliminated, automated or delegated. Basically, these tasks **must be done by you!**



Step Four: Setting Time Parameters

This step is optional. but it is one of my favorite steps to complete! You are going to go through each item in your schedule category and write down how long it will take to complete that certain task.

There are two benefits to doing this;

1 – By adding up the time it is going to take to complete each individual task, you can ensure the tasks aren't going to take more time to complete than you have.

An example of this would be;

I have **49 hours per week** to dedicate to these tasks. (Monday to Friday I have 5 hours; 5 am-7 am and 7:00 pm-10:00 pm, and Saturday to Sunday I have 12 hours; 10:00 am to 10:00 pm). If I add up the time it is going to take to complete my tasks and it **adds up to more than 49 hours, then I know I need to eliminate, delegate or automate more tasks!**

2 – By deciding how much time I must dedicate to each task, I am **setting a goal for myself**. If you do well with deadlines and goals, you will find this extremely motivating!

When deciding how much time to allot to each task, be realistic, but don't give yourself too much time either. You want to be **efficient** with the time you have.

Step Five: Prioritize

By now, your tasks list should be considerably smaller than when you started! Plus, if you did the time parameter step, you should feel confident that you have enough time to complete every task that is on your list (barring legitimate emergencies!).

But now, you need to decide where you are going to start. There is no hard and fast rule when it comes to deciding where you should start. But I do have a couple of things I like to keep in mind when I am prioritizing my tasks;

1. Is there something on this list that is **EXTREMELY important to get done**? This may be a deadline for work, or something your kiddo needs for school. Anything with a deadline should be a high priority!
2. **What are your big goals**? I always prioritize my task list based on my goals. For example, I am currently trying to build a business that will allow my husband and I to start a family, travel a little bit more, and pay off our debts! As a result, anything on my task list that relates to my business will trump tasks that I want to get done around the house. It is important that if you have a partner, you sit down together and ensure you both understand where your priorities are. In our personal circumstance, my husband is extremely supportive of this GIANT goal of mine, and so he doesn't mind if the laundry piles up a bit, or if the floors haven't been vacuumed in a few days!
3. Have you ever heard the quote; **"Eat That Frog!"**? This famous quote comes from the idea that you should **get your biggest tasks done first** and leave your smaller tasks for later. By getting your big task out of the way, you can look forward to knowing the rest of your day/week is only going to get easier! This quote reminds me to prioritize the big tasks before the small ones!

Step Six: Schedule

The final step to creating your to-do list is scheduling your tasks. For this step, I would highly suggest you use a planner! This can be any planner you enjoy using. That may be a whiteboard that is hanging on the wall of your kitchen, a planner from the dollar

store, or a Bullet Journal! If you want to learn more about my planning tool recommendation, go [here](#)!

Ready to start your own Bullet Journal? Get access to my FREE mini-course, and get your Bullet Journal set up in less than two hours!

You are going to work through your list of tasks and schedule them based on the priority number you have given them, as well as how much time you must dedicate to the tasks at that time.

Another trick I like to do is **planning certain things** when I know they will **come easily to me**. For example, I do my best writing in the early hours of the day, so I will plan any writing I have to do for the week in my morning time slot.

There are a couple of different planning styles you can choose from. I have outlined them below, but I highly recommend trying them both to find what suits your personal circumstance best!

Weekly vs. Daily Planning

There is no right or wrong way to plan and will solely depend on your personal preference!

If you are someone who loves to plan everything in advance, a weekly schedule is probably best for you.

If you are someone who likes to plan as they go and maintain a little bit of flexibility, then daily scheduling is probably best for you!

I highly suggest you try both to see what suits you best! Even if you think you already know, I still recommend you try both. You may find you prefer daily planning, but you are accomplishing more with weekly planning. This would be helpful knowledge for you to have on weeks when you have more tasks than usual to complete!

Remember, you will develop your own scheduling routine as you take these steps week after week!



Take Action!

Hopefully, you are feeling inspired to go create yourself a to-do list for the upcoming week! While this blog post was incredibly long (sorry about that!), the process of doing it **should not take you more than thirty minutes!**

Don't stress too much about doing it right or wrong! Your process will change as you evolve and get better at making your lists! You will even change this process I have provided over time to better suit your needs!

Do you have any to-do list tips you want to share with the community? Be sure to leave a comment below!

Until next time!

Keri B