



5

simple ways.



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# decorate

## ON A DIME

Decorating, designing and creating are my passion. My best ideas strike either when I'm sitting in church {yes, I know that's awful} or in the shower. I love my "job" of decorating my home {and the homes of others} for as few bucks as possible!

### 1 FIND YOUR STYLE

Even if you don't know what your particular decorating style is, **it is important to determine what you like and what you don't like.** Taking the time to do this now will save you a lot of time later when you're out shopping.

My style is eclectic because I love so many different styles and trends and I can't just settle on one. Like mine, your decorating "taste" will likely evolve over the years as trends go and come.

### 2 GET INSPIRED

When I feel like I've hit a dead end in my creativity, one place I find inspiration in magazines. **I love ripping out pages of ideas that I want to remember.** I also thrive on reading [decorating blogs](#) and [craft blogs](#). Subscribe to a few of them and get inspired! Pinterest is another fabulous place to gain decorating inspiration. There are so many creative and amazing women online! Truly, we have so much inspiration at our fingertips!

### 3 SHOP FRUGALLY

The very best places to find inexpensive home decor items are **thrift stores and yard sales.** I've scored furniture, accessories, wall art and many other items that I've made over with a good coat of spray paint! I also love to shop at TJMaxx, Homegoods and Hobby Lobby {50% off sales!}!

Whenever you're shopping for home decor items, look for timeless pieces that you can buy for next to nothing. My mantra is, "If you love it and can afford it, get it because you'll probably use it." I usually have a yard sale each year which helps keep my home decor items under control!



## 4 REARRANGE WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE

The easiest and most inexpensive way to freshen up your home decor is to move around what you already have. From wall art and accessories, to photographs and floral arrangements, **change them up and move them around!** If you have items in storage, that you haven't looked at for a while, it might be the perfect time to pull them out. Arrange accessories in "collections" to make a larger impact. A few large items are much more pleasing than many little knickknacks that can appear as clutter – plus they are a pain to dust. Ahem.

## 5 USE PAINT

Besides rearranging what you already have, painting is another super inexpensive way to brighten up your home. From walls and ceilings to furniture and even floors {gasp!} **Paint can transform it all!** I'm planning on painting a wood floor in our house because it's pretty icky from water damage. I can't wait for that project!

Anyway, back to paint... My favorite paints are Benjamin Moore and Sherwin Williams. However, since everything I do is "on a dime" **I have Home Depot or Lowe's color match my Benjamin Moore or Sherwin Williams paint samples.** Lowe's sells low-VOC paint and I highly recommend it! I've also heard wonderful things about Sherwin Williams Harmony latex paint with zero-VOC. I'm going to break down and try it one of these days! Stenciling an accent wall or a piece of furniture is another way to utilize paint well.

# LIVE A Natural LIFESTYLE

There are all kinds of different definitions for the word "natural". Many foods are labeled "natural" in an attempt to appeal to the conscientious consumer. Corn growers pay for advertisements that say that High Fructose Corn Syrup is "natural". Well, sure it is...in a loose sense of the word I suppose, but that doesn't make it good for us. Shucks...arsenic is natural.

My own definition of living a "Natural Lifestyle" would be "getting back to the basics". Whether we're talking about food, family choices, in general taking care of ourselves...doesn't it just sound refreshing to "get back to the basics"?

## 1 Eat Real Food

Yes, you're so surprised I listed this one aren't you? Real food is best. Food in it's natural form. Food that isn't processed. Food that tastes so stinkin' good you don't know what to do with yourself!!! It's amazing what food without chemicals tastes like!

Need a little help getting started? Here are some links to past series I've written about how I feed my family and about why I feel real food is best:

- [How I feed my family](#)
- [Getting real with food](#)
- [Our healthy eating journey](#)
- [Simple Steps for healthy eating](#)

Stay tuned- I'm still working on this one!

## 2 Drink Water

I already wrote about how you should drink more water and told you about some healthy alternatives to soda and other not-so-good-for-you beverages. But really...one of the simplest (and cheapest!) ways for you to adopt a more natural lifestyle is to stop filling your body with icky beverages and just drink water.



## 3 Stay Home More

This may seem like a weird item for our Natural Lifestyle list...but it doesn't get much simpler or more natural than this. Stay home more. You'll save money, your vehicles will last longer...and joy of joys...you may not be so worn out all the time! I find that when I'm running from here to there and back again...I am completely exhausted AND behind on all the work I need to do at home. We don't need THAT much outside "stuff". When you're home more...you'll find you're more rested and more relaxed...naturally.



## 4 Exercise

Yeah, and this advice is coming from me...the girl who doesn't really like to exercise. Guess what though?! My husband and I have made it a point to exercise together three days a week for the past few weeks and I'm actually starting to like it! I've heard people say that once you start exercising regularly, you begin to crave it. I never believed them. Until now.

It's really not as hard as you think, but exercising is just like anything else you need to be doing...**YOU ACTUALLY HAVE TO DO IT**. I know, profound. The main idea is this: Do what you can to not be sedentary.

A side benefit of exercising: You'll crave more water and more real foods. Yeah, somehow having a candy bar and soda after exercising feels a little silly. Water and fruit sounds much better.



## 5 Waste Less

The more natural your lifestyle, the less waste you'll have. If you make your food from scratch, you'll have a lot less packaging trash. If you serve smaller portions and make it a point to eat leftovers, you'll throw away less food. If you don't buy stuff you don't need, you'll waste a LOT less money. If you use cloth napkins and let your kids draw on used scratch paper, you'll save a lot of trees. None of these things are hard. You just have to be a bit more intentional.

And then of course there are all kinds of other things I'd recommend as you work your way to a more Natural Lifestyle, like planting a garden, buying locally grown produce and other foods, getting good sleep and eating lots of chocolate.

Just kidding. Chocolate may be natural, but eating lots of it would be "The Simplest way to Gain Five Pounds". That's another post for another day

# save time in the KITCHEN

“Between fixing breakfast, lunch, and dinner, washing dishes, cleaning up, shopping, and everything else we do everyday, it adds up to a lot of time in the kitchen. Here’s simple ways to knock off some of that time...”

## 1. MENU PLAN

Take the time to plan your menu for the week or month. I know I have said it before, but menu planning is my number one time saver when it comes to cooking. When I have a menu plan, I avoid the 5 o’clock panic of what is for dinner. It also keeps me from making unplanned trips to the grocery store. If I have a plan, I know what I need ahead of time and it simplifies my grocery shopping.

## 2. STOCK THE PANTRY

Keeping a well stocked pantry is so important to saving time in the kitchen. It will save you extra trips to the store and will enable you to put together a quick and easy meal at any time.

If you have a pantry stocked with the basics like canned tomatoes, canned beans, pasta, rice, potatoes, basic spices, and a few other things, then you will always be able to put together meals like one pot spaghetti, potatoes and sausage, a simple soup or chili, or Mexican rice and beans.

I often find myself planning ahead and cooking things that I can use over several days. I can make a large batch of chili and we can eat it for several days, but we don't have to eat it as chili every day. I can serve the leftover chili as chili or I can serve it over baked potatoes or even make a chili casserole.

Also, if I have several dishes that I know need ground beef, it is easy to brown it all at once and use it throughout the week. The same idea goes for chopping vegetables. If I am going to be using chopped onions and green peppers in several recipes throughout the week, I can save a lot of time by chopping them all at once.

### 3. FREEZER FOOD

### 4. COOK ONCE, EAT TWICE

### 5. USE SHORTCUTS

We all have those days where things do not go as planned. Unexpected things are going to happen. Kids get sick, cars break down, and many other things happen that can change our plans. We can make those days so much easier just by keeping a few simple things in the freezer.

Now I am not talking about a ton of freezer meals here. I keep it pretty basic, but you will often find things like taco meat in my freezer. I cook it ahead of time. Then all I have to do is pull it out of the freezer and use it in tacos, burritos, nachos, or enchiladas.

I also keep cooked chicken in the freezer. I can use it for soups, casseroles, chicken sandwiches, or chicken tacos. Other things that freeze well are chili, soups, meatloaf, and meatballs.

Do not be too hard on yourself. It is okay to occasionally use paper plates to save you time in the kitchen. It is okay to keep things on hand like pasta sauces, frozen french fries, cake and brownie mixes, and other quick solutions.

I usually prefer from scratch homemade items, but it is okay to give yourself a break occasionally and do a few things that save you time and make life in the kitchen easier.



# EARN money FROM your blog.

1.

## PUT UP BANNER ADS WITH LIJIT.

Most banner ad programs are either inaccessible to smaller bloggers, or require a lot of maintenance and setup to make sure they only show family-friendly ads. But, I'm really excited about the [Lijit ad network](#)!

Their ads are easy-to-use, and in my experience, very nice looking ads that seem to be generally family-friendly. You get paid when the ads are shown on your site, not when someone clicks or signs up for something. They're virtually maintenance-free, and it's a cash payment (minimum of \$25 in earnings before you'll receive a payment).

Depending on the size of your blog, it may take awhile to add up, but it's so easy it's a no-brainer. You can use it on a Wordpress blog, or Blogger, or really any blogging platform!

2.

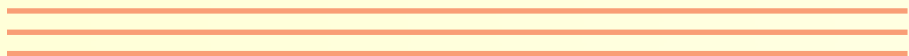
## EARN BY HELPING YOUR FRIENDS EARN CASH AND GIFT CARDS

I love sharing about ways to save money, but I also love sharing about how to earn money! Here's a couple of easy programs you can use to help your blog readers earn cash and gift cards, and you'll earn right along side them:

You can help your friends earn Amazon or Starbucks gift cards through programs like [Swagbucks](#) – if they sign up under your referral link, you earn points when they earn points; so you both win!

I love referring people to places like [MySurvey](#) and [Pinecone Research](#) – two legitimate survey sites that actually pay out in cash! And, MySurvey gives you points whenever a friend you refer completes their first survey! (Pinecone Research does not have a referral program and they only accept applications periodically.) These sites usually love families with small children – that demographic gets lots of surveys.

Again, you don't have to do a whole post about Swagbucks to use your referral link. Maybe you're going to tell them about the great deal you got on EMU boots from Amazon and how you paid for part of it with Amazon gift cards you earned from Swagbucks!



### 3. GET REFERRAL CARDS

Many daily deal sites like Groupon, Mamapedia, and Living Social offer referral credits when you share their deals on your site. Groupon will credit your account with \$10 in Groupon bucks when a friend you've referred makes their first purchase; Living Social offers \$5.

As a side note, you may want to talk to a CPA about any money you make from blogging. Those \$10 Groupon credits are awesome until you realize that you may need to report them as income and pay 30+% income taxes on those "free" credits.

But you're saying I'm not into blogging about good deals, just personal, family stuff like a trip to the zoo? Well, if you used a Groupon to pay for a trip to the zoo, mention it to your friends when you tell them about the awesome time you had at the zoo! If you're blogging about a fun experience you had shopping downtown, tell them you got a great deal at that little boutique with a voucher you got from Living Social!

### 4. RECOMMEND RELEVANT PRODUCTS

Have you ever written about how awesome a new toy you got for your kid's birthday is? Or about a fun new book you've been enjoying recently? Chances are you probably linked to the product on Amazon or the manufacturer's website so that your blog readers could find out more about it.

Well, in many cases, you can actually earn a "commission" if they happen to buy that product or another one after clicking on your link to that site! It's called an affiliate link, and the link allows the company to know that you clicked to their site via your friend's link, and they'll credit that site with a small percentage of the sale if your friend happens to buy it. It's how many companies choose to market their products instead of paying up-front for other advertising - this way, they just pay the affiliate "advertiser" if they happen to make a sale.

Never recommend a product just because you might make a commission on it! Here's my commitment to my readers.

You can join Amazon's affiliate program here - unless you're in Colorado or a few other states that they don't work with because of sales tax laws.

Or, another, simpler option is to sign up with VigLink. It's a simple script that you can embed onto your blog that automatically adds a personal affiliate link to the links on your blog if that merchant allows it, and it extends much farther than just Amazon. Obviously, VigLink takes a cut off the top of that, but once it's installed, all the work is done for you and they just pay you via Paypal.

### 5. SELL YOUR OWN PRODUCTS

If you have a blog with any readership at all, you have an audience that is interested in what you are doing. Maybe, just maybe, you might be able to use your blog to launch an Etsy store, or publish an eBook.

If you're always showing off your amazing craft projects and people are saying "I wish I could do that!" why not make those projects and sell them on Etsy? Or, you could make an eBook with step-by-step instructions for a variety of craft projects, and sell the eBook.

Marketing products, whether tangible or digital, is difficult. Trust me: I've done it with Grocery University, and while it's been profitable, it's also been a lot of work. But, it can be fun and financially rewarding to sell something you enjoy creating



take  
better  
pictures

# learn

Learn your camera. When you opened your camera, you probably popped in the battery and card and right away started snapping pictures. Digital cameras are pretty simple to use, but most cameras come with so many wonderful options. What a waste of your camera's capabilities if you don't take the time to find out everything it can do!

This may mean reading your manual. If you find it hard to understand your manual, I've found there are quite a few instructional youtube videos out there that will teach you about your camera. Another option is a book written specifically for your camera. I bought my [Canon 40D](#) from ebay and it didn't come with a manual, but I picked up the book [Canon EOS 40D Guide to Digital Photography](#) which is even better than a manual, on Amazon.com and found out everything my camera could do.

# read

There are some great books and blogs out there that can teach you even more about photography than your manual can. Your manual will tell you what button to push, these books will tell you how to combine those buttons and maybe a few other things to create stunning photography. Here are a few I've found helpful: [Scott Kelby's Digital Photography Boxed Set, Volumes 1, 2, and 3](#) [Understanding Exposure: How to Shoot Great Photographs with a Film or Digital Camera](#), by Bryan Peterson  
Blogs: [Digital Photography School](#) and [My 3 Boybarians 31 Days to a Better Photo](#) series. I also did a series on [Using Your Camera](#).

# practice

After understanding what your camera can do, practicing is the number one best thing you can do to learn how to take better pictures. Don't be afraid to get out of the green box (Auto) and learn to change the things that will make a big difference in the quality of your photos: ISO, white balance and aperture. Take walks outside, invite your friends and family over, follow your pets around and shoot them (you know what I mean). The world is filled with so many beautiful things put there for the sole purpose of making you a better photographer. Take advantage of it.

# committ

Now is the time to join a [365 project](#) or even a [project 52](#) if 365 seems too hard. Either take a photo a day (365) or a photo a week (52) and post it to a flickr site or your own blog. It's a great way to share your photos and motivate yourself to pick up your camera regularly. Just be sure to save a high resolution file of the image you choose to post in a folder named 365 or 52 on your computer just in case you decide to print a book at the end of your year. I decided I wanted to do that with last year's project and I failed to save each image in a separate folder so now I'm going through every folder in my hard drive to find the pictures I posted. Learn from my mistake.

# print

I'm a big believer in the printed picture. Looking at your pictures and sharing them on the computer is great, but having images you can hold in your hand or hang on your wall is priceless. I make it easy on myself, I simply print about 50 images every 3 months or so and put them in albums. My kids love to pull those albums off the shelf and look through them. When you've collected a few favorites, have them enlarged and hang them on the walls. I did that last year and it is [my favorite wall now](#). I know you can do it! This is the year you are going to learn how to use that great new camera and I, for one, can't wait to see what you do.

# save money

## 1 TRACK YOUR SPENDING MAKE A BUDGET

It is nearly impossible to save money without a plan. Even if there is no money left at the end of the month, creating a budget helps you see exactly where that money is going.

I always find that tracking your spending for a month before you make a budget is a good idea. Write down every penny you spend for one month, then the next month make a realistic budget based on your spending habits. I have never met anyone who wasn't surprised by their spending habits once they wrote everything down.

When we first started writing down all our spending, I was shocked at our grocery and dining out bill. Simple changes allowed us to cut our spending by almost 50% in these areas and we were debt free in less than a year!

If you need help tracking your spending there are several free and inexpensive options:

[Manilla\\*](#), [Mint.com](#), [Mvelopes\\*](#), [Quicken\\*](#).

\* Affiliate links

## 2 MENU PLAN

Although I don't have any numbers to prove my theory, I think people in America waste a lot of money on food. If you set a food budget, you can plan your menu according to the money you have available. Menu planning is so simple, there is no reason why you shouldn't be doing it! Menu planning helps save money in many ways.

1. If you know what you are eating, you can create a shopping list, use coupons, and buy sale items.
2. Purchasing food based on your plan helps avoid those... "what do I make for dinner" moments.
3. Working leftover nights into your menu plan uses up leftovers instead of letting them go to waste. Throwing away leftovers is like throwing money in the garbage!

## 3 WAIT

I had friends who made a list of all the items they wanted to purchase that cost more than \$100. They put this list on their fridge, and they waited. At the end of a certain period of time if they still wanted the item and had the money, they bought it. Most of the time, they didn't want it after they waited. I can count on one hand the deals I missed because I waited, and I regretted it. My husband and I even talk about those few once in a lifetime purchases we passed up. We talk about them, because they are so few and far between. Every thing goes on sale, and goes on sale again, and goes on sale again. There are very few once in a lifetime deals. If you can avoid impulse purchases you will save money. My biggest financial mistakes all came from impulse buying! If you learn to wait for things you want you will usually find that you can get a better deal, you can find it used, or you will realize you really didn't want it that much in the first place.

## 4 PAY CASH

There is something about using the green stuff that makes spending it just a little harder. When our family was getting out of debt, using the envelope system was key to reducing our spending. We spent less, so we could pay off more. The other benefit of cash- if you don't have any, you can't spend it! Research has shown that people spend 12-18% more when paying with a debit or credit card. I know there are cash back rewards with certain cards, and we can argue the benefits all day, but no one has gotten rich off of points or cash back.

## 5 RECYCLE

I am not talking about newspapers in your recycle bin, although that's a good idea too. Before you throw something out think about how you might use that item for something else. Worn socks = dust rag, shoe box = mailing box, coffee can = storage for kids crayons, newspaper = wrapping paper, the possibilities are endless. If you can reuse it then you are probably saving yourself time and money by not having to purchase something new.

# start using coupons

1

understand the cycle

Just about everything in a store will go on sale at some point, so why pay full price if you don't have to? The cycle differs a little bit based on where you live: in the South, grocery sales run on 6-8 week cycles, and 12 weeks in other parts of the country.

To save the most, we want to watch for sales and only buy at the low price. An example is cereal, regularly it can cost \$4+ for name brand cereal. When it is on a good sale though you'll catch it for \$1.50-\$2. You've saved 50% and haven't even used your coupon yet!

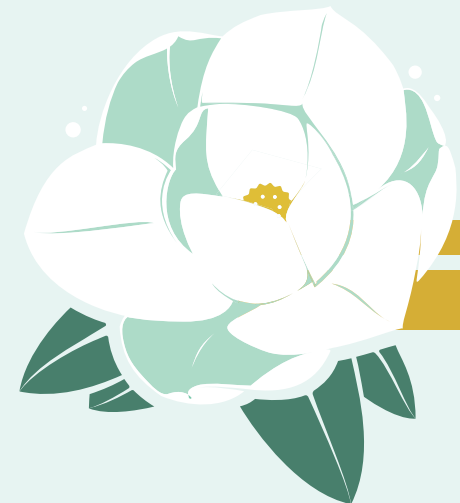
2

stockup at the sale price

Since we just learned that items are only on sale every 6-12 weeks, it's important to buy enough at the low price to get from one sale to the next.

For some products this only means 1 or 2, and for others a little more stocking up is required. Don't worry, we're not talking about hundreds of anything - it will all come on sale again soon (I promise!).

To get an idea of how much you need keep a list for one week of what you use then multiply by 3 to get an idea for 6 weeks or multiply by 6 for 12 weeks. (Learn what is a low price by using a [Buy Price List](#)).



# 3

## use those coupons

When you are shopping and see that great price, now is the time to use the coupon!

You are allowed one coupon per item so that means if you want (5) boxes of cereal and have \$1 off coupons you can use FIVE coupons!! (Note that a coupon for \$1/2 is the only coupon allowed for both items you buy) That means your sale cereal mentioned above would be \$0.50 to \$1 after the sale and coupon!!

To gather coupons:

Buy the Sunday paper each week or ask friends and family for their unused coupon inserts. You'd be amazed at how many people are willing to give up these money-saving gems! Keep an eye out while you are shopping for booklets of coupons in store and get familiar with printing coupons. Having more coupons at your disposal means more opportunities to save! ([For More Information Watch This Short Video](#) on finding coupons).

# 4

## focus on a favorite store

Shopping with coupons can be overwhelming if you try to get every deal at every store. Focus on (1) favorite grocery store and (1) drugstore and start paying attention to their sales. Remember you want to use the coupons you've collected only when the item is on sale to get the lowest possible price. So each week go in and buy 6 weeks worth of what is on sale. For the first few weeks

you'll also have things you need that haven't come on sale, so buy one week of those items. Soon though your pantry will become a wonderful little stockpile and you'll be able to hold off and only buy items when they are on sale!

Southern Savers covers the all of the national drugstores and major grocery stores in the south so you can print out your shopping list and corresponding coupons each week.

# 5

## get coupons on items you need now

Sometimes you really need something right now and waiting for a sale just isn't going to work. To find a coupon for something try using the [Coupon Database](#). You'll be amazed how many coupons are out there!

For a more in-depth guide on using coupons check out the Southern Savers [Learn To Coupon](#) section. If all the coupon lingo has you lost get more info on coupons with the [Coupon Facts](#) page.



# dress fabulously for less

## Create a core wardrobe

My goal is to establish a quality core wardrobe that oozes class in its cut, color, fabric, and style. I'm searching for ten essential pieces that will last for years to come. Building a core wardrobe is key whether women buy retail or second hand, and it's really about simplifying your wardrobe. So often, we purchase something just because it's a good deal, and we may not particularly love it. Nothing is a "good deal" if it's not worn, so by establishing your ten essential core wardrobe pieces, you can then begin to mix and match with other items from your closet. For me, one of the most difficult stumbling blocks in purchasing clothes at thrift stores is the huge amount of "junk" one has to go through in order to find the "jewel." Identifying essential pieces in a core wardrobe makes that process much easier because there is a starting place to the "search and score" process. So whether it's finding a \$360 Anne Klein suit for \$7 to enjoying the versatility of a trench coat or a little black dress, managing my wardrobe by starting with these pieces has been key.

## Buy clothing out of season

One of the ways that I have managed to save thousands of dollars on clothing is by shopping out of season. Applying this basic shopping principle works so well that you can often find clothes at the end of the season for 50-75% off the original price. My Frugal Fashionista hint for thrifting today? Now is the perfect time to look for summer clothing. People's New Year's Resolutions are in full swing and closets are being attacked. Do you think they are donating their awesome winter Land's End coats in January? No! They are purging adorable Ann Taylor summer sun dresses. You can be assured that when it's 90 degrees here in NC, I will be looking at Goodwill for my "new to me" J Crew pea coats for \$5.

## // Be bold with color & style

Only over the last few years, have I allowed myself to have fun with fashion and dare to be a bit different. Last week my seven year old daughter said, "Mommy, you look like a cute, little teenager." Yes, I succumbed and tucked my jeans into some look alike Uggs boots that I picked up this summer, but I considered that high praise from her. I had fun wearing it because it was so different for me. I was still dressing my age, but wasn't afraid to wear something that was trendy for the year because I knew I hadn't spent a fortune to create the look. One of my "must do's" when browsing for clothes in a thrift store is to look for creative details and interesting hemlines. This dress is something I would have NEVER bought full price because it took me so long to get up the nerve to wear it. I often hear, "Well, it looks great on you, but I could never wear something like that." Why not? Have fun with fashion. Once I started dressing outside my typical fashion personality, I realized, I don't have a set style anymore. In fact, I don't know if I ever did. I wear a variety of styles, and have never enjoyed it more.

Don't forget that in the matter of frugal fashion, color is power! A shirt can go from blah to beautiful, just by changing your choice of color or accessorizing with pizzazz. Have fun with it and don't be afraid to try new things. Determine your skin tone and the best colors for you. This is crucial. A shirt can be fabulous, but if it's not your color, don't wear it. So don't be afraid to Take the Color Challenge and wear some new colors.

## // Know what NOT to wear

Start purging your closet and eliminating outdated clothes. Remember, this is about simplifying. Donate items if you haven't worn it in a year, but if it's a classic or core wardrobe piece, rethink it first. I've been having fun with items that were lost in an overstuffed closet. Get rid of outdated patterns, please. Nothing screams frump more than florals from the 90's. Also, clothes that are way too baggy or too tight need a new home. Somewhere in this generation, it's become OK to wear clothes that are incredibly tight, skirts that are way too high and shirts that expose huge amounts of cleavage. It's labeled "sexy"...I beg to differ. Let's start a new trend and model for our children that fashion can be fabulous, while still leaving something to the imagination, but I think I may be on a tangent.

## // Accessorize!

I've left this one for last because it's the single most important fashion skill to attempt when one wants to turn frump into fabulous fashion. Whether it's accessorizing with necklaces, bracelets, handbags, hats, boots or scarves...start somewhere. Buy a scarf! Learn how to tie it, and USE them. Shop your closet for a simple shirt, add a scarf and don a great pair of boots, and you've instantly turned into a Frugal Fashionista for pennies on the dollar. In my "One Dress with three looks" posts I show how a scarf and boots can make the simplest of outfits into instant glam. Try it and have fun.

# have a successful homeschool day.

## Stick to schedule.

Or if you are not a scheduler, stick to a routine. Or if you are a more relaxed homeschooler, stick to specific goals that you are aiming toward. The quickest way to become frustrated with homeschooling is to have no direction.

## Give yourself a break.

No schedule is perfect, and it is guaranteed that your schedule will be derailed with regularity if you are dealing with children of the human being variety. We've all had those days when the 4 year old spills an entire gallon of milk and the toilet overflows right after the dog throws up in the living room, right?

Pad your day with plenty of down time. A sure fire way to get burned out is to have too many activities planned and constantly be rushing eight children from one thing to the next. Trust me. Just keep telling yourself that there is always tomorrow and then be sure to get back on track the next day.



Keep the long term goal in mind.

We have a few framed scriptures around our house that I can look at to remind me what I am shooting for.

Smile!

Remember that you signed up for this gig because you love those lil' rascals more than your own self and you want what's best for them. Deliberately look for the joy in what you are doing. Laugh. Sing. Make sure your children know you are glad to be with them.

I'll bet your pharmacist doesn't get to smooch the chubby cheeks of his co-workers or hear them say, "You're my best friend, Mommy!" Granted, his co-workers probably don't leave peanut buttery hand prints on his rear, but, hey, we take the good with the bad, right?

Carve out you time.

Don't get me wrong. I don't necessarily mean that you need to head to Starbucks or even take a leisurely bubble bath. This could be a cup of coffee first thing in the morning or a few minutes each evening in bed with a book.

I require all my children to observe a one hour nap time, in which all is quiet and no one is telling me knock-knock jokes or asking me where babies come from or how many days it is until summer. I can use this time to catch up on laundry or just stare out the window. I tell them that I need this time to think without interruptions and so do they.

No matter what you are doing during this time, PRAY. Ask God to guide you and bless your efforts.

[Tips by Connie from Frockity Smocks](#)

# ORGANIZE your home.

## DON'T DISCOUNT 5 MINUTES.

So often we get stuck on the huge mountain of stuff that needs to be tackled that we tend to put off dealing with it until it can be dealt with all at once. The problem here, especially for busy families, is that a huge chunk of time almost never shows up. Thankfully many organizing tasks can be completed in short bursts of attention. For instance, in 5 minutes you can gather 5 things for your donation station, in 5 minutes you can check for expired products in your fridge, in 5 minutes you can organize your daughter's hair barrettes, update your calendar, etc. Over time those few minutes and tasks will add up!

## NEVER LEAVE A ROOM EMPTY HANDED.

I've written about this one before and it is by far the one thing that helps me stay on top of clutter and reign in the chaos that is "stuff" out of its home. I never go from one floor to the next or one room to the next empty handed. That's it. I go into more detail about this on this post [here](#).

## DO A 10 MIN. TIDY BEFORE BED.

Each night before bed take a few minutes to walk around and organize yourself for the next day. This involves just taking 10 minutes to ensure items for school are ready in your child's backpack, items to be mailed are ready to go by the door, a list of errands to be done is created along with calls that need to be made, you've got an idea what you'll make for dinner, etc. It's all about giving yourself the next day advantage. You may think you'll have time to do all those things in the morning but without fail something comes up to sabotage your good intentions and you spend the rest of the day scrambling and out of sorts.

## USE VISUAL CUES TO ELIMINATE CLUTTER.

Sometimes with everything else going on, we can't remember what we've used and what we haven't. Of course we want to believe we have used something and even try to convince ourselves we have. Take any guesswork out of the equation by using some simple visual cues to remind you. For instance, place colored sticker dots on items of clothing or other miscellaneous items around your home. Mark the date on the calendar. When you use the item, remove the dot. At the end of the year you'll know exactly what you've used and haven't used. If it hasn't been used you know it's time for it to go

## CREATE “STATIONS” IN YOUR HOME.

I'm a huge fan of stations. Others might refer to them as zones. Whichever term you use, clustering activities in one place works! Rather than walk all around your kitchen gathering supplies to make coffee and tea, keep everything located together in one cupboard. This tip can apply to so many other areas of your home as well....games, craft supplies, snacks, you name it! It saves considerable time when trying to find what you need.

Happy Organizing my friends! If you're looking for more inspiration & motivation check out my [52 weeks of organizing!](#)

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