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Casual Cleaning

● **Do half the job.** Before bringing her kids to school, Knapp pulls all chairs out from around the dining room table and puts the vacuum in the middle of the floor. "Later in the day, it'll take as much time to move everything back as to run the vacuum through real quick," says Knapp.

● **Do it now.** The minute you get up in the morning—even before you brush your teeth—make your bed. "If you don't do it at that moment, you may never get it done," says Julie Morgenstern, a professional organizer and author of *Time Management from the Inside Out* (Henry Holt).

● **Quik yourself into it.** The night before she needs to clean, Knapp sets her cleaning supplies out on the bathroom counter (out of her children's reach). "Every time you go in there, you're going to see the cleaning supplies. And by the end of the day, you're sure to tackle the task," she says.

● **Plan ahead.** Jani Hilton, author of *Housekeeping Secrets My Mother*

Total Know-How

Sneaky Ways to Get Things Done

By Diane Benson Harrington

When it comes to such day-in, day-out duties as cleaning the house, attending an exercise class or running errands, I'm great at planning but lousy on follow-through. And I've found that I'm not alone. "We all have the best intentions," says Amy Knapp, creator of the Family Organizer, a 16-month datebook planner. But we often get distracted and don't complete what we've set out to do each day. Though there's no magic pill to help you remember your to-do's, there are a few tricks you can try.



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Never Tought Me (Prima Publishing), gets a head start on housework by applying oven cleaner, clothing stain-remover and carpet cleansers before going to bed. "If you start a job at night, then you have no choice but to deal with it in the morning," she says.

● **Make it a team effort.** Have the family work as a unit to clean the house. Instead of rooms, assign tasks—one person dusts, another picks up clutter, another vacuums. When everyone works together, it's easier to stay motivated and focused. Morgenstern advised one husband and wife to act as a team to clean the dishes after dinner. "That was their time together while the two boys went

off and did their homework," she says.

● **Save the best for last.** "It's human nature to do the things on your list that you want to do first," says Knapp. "But, by the end of the day, you no longer have time to tackle the activities you've been putting off." Instead, get the least pleasant chores out of the way first.

Laundry Logistics

● **Use two or more hampers.** I bought a two-compartment hamper for my four-year-old. When he changes into his pajamas every evening, he knows to put dark clothes

Diane Benson Harrington is a freelance writer in Melrose, Illinois.

Take Five Minutes to...

- Empty the dishwasher.
- Fold a small load of clothes.
- Vacuum a room.
- Make two beds.
- Clean a mirror.
- Return a quick phone call.
- Make a doctor/dentist/vet appointment.
- Call for information on a class you wish to enroll in.
- Change the sheets.
- Sweep the floor.
- Straighten a drawer.
- Water your houseplants or shower your silk flowers.
- Wipe down the bathroom counter.
- Clean a toilet.
- Empty wastebaskets.
- Clean out your purse.
- Sew on a button.
- Clean out your underwear drawer.

Did You Know?

Putting off chores may make you sick. Dianne Tice, Ph.D., a psychology professor at Case Western Reserve University, found that the stress from procrastinating and doing tasks at the last minute weakens the immune system.