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**Texas
Agricultural
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ABILITY NOT DISABILITY

Organizing
Housework



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ABILITY — NOT DISABILITY: ORGANIZING HOUSEWORK

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Before organizing housework, think about Rudyard Kipling's poem, "I Keep Six Honest Service Men."

"I keep six honest serving men
(they taught me all I know)
their names are What and Why and When
and How and Where and Who."

Ask yourself these six questions when you organize household tasks. Remember disabilities are physical not mental. By answering these questions you should discover easier, simpler and more efficient ways to do household chores.

WHAT jobs need to be done?

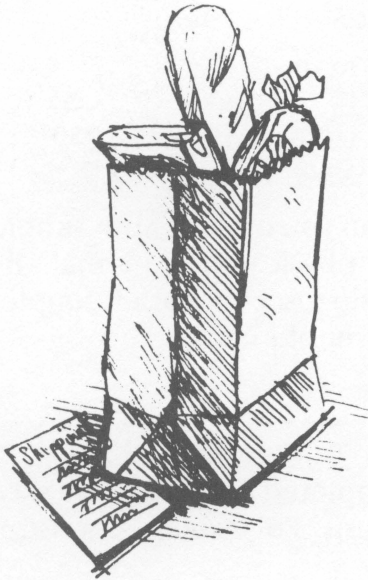
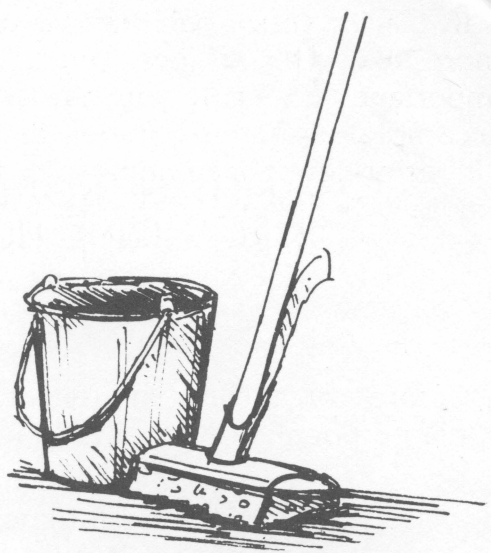
Begin by listing all jobs to be completed on a daily, weekly, biweekly, monthly and seasonal basis. For example, a list of weekly tasks might include:

- vacuum carpet
(maybe twice weekly)
- dust
- clean bathrooms and
kitchen



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- mop floors
- wash clothes
(maybe twice weekly)
- iron
- change bedding
- buy groceries



Second, rank the tasks in order of importance, those that *must* be accomplished are “A” priority; those that *should* be accomplished are “B” priority and those that *don’t* absolutely have to be done are “C” priority. Your list might look like this:

Buy groceries
Wash clothes
Change bedding

“A” priority
(must be done)

Vacuum carpet or rugs
Clean bathrooms and
kitchen

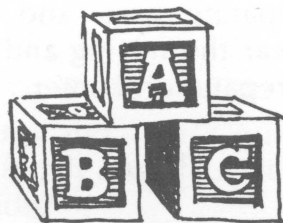
“B” priority
(should be done)

Mop floors
Dust
Iron

“C” priority
(does not have to be done)

By placing your weekly tasks in order of importance, you are more likely to achieve your “A” priorities, those most important to you. If you have enough energy or time to accomplish more tasks during the week, you can tackle your “B” priorities of vacuuming and cleaning the bathrooms and kitchen. By the end of the week, if you don’t feel like doing chores, postpone your “C” priorities.

Your household will not collapse if floors are somewhat dirty or surfaces haven’t been dusted or clothes are never ironed. These choices are based on what you think is important. To cope with a disability, you may have to make some tough decisions to determine exactly what things are really important to you. Each person has different expectations of how and when housework should be done.



WHY should a job be done?

Is it necessary? Ask yourself this question *often* when you plan household tasks. You may discover many household tasks are unnecessary. First form realistic standards for home management. This often involves choosing between your “A” and “C” priorities.

Articles that require a great deal of upkeep may be put away or replaced with articles that require less care. For example, permanent press clothing and tablecloths, straw and plastic place mats, no-wax tile and easy-care upholstery, can ease your work load.

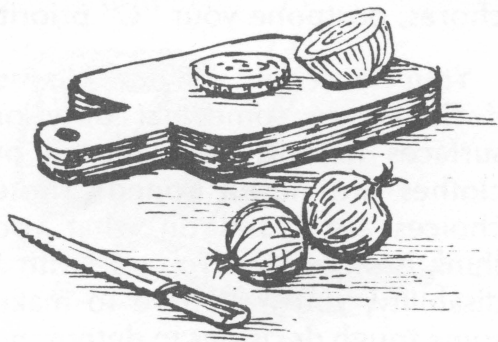
WHERE should a job be done?

Could you save energy and time by doing it somewhere else?

Examine your tasks and your home situation to decide where to complete each task. Try to arrange a special work place for each job. For example, store all stain removal products and

laundry products near the laundry center. Organize your laundry area for an easy work flow, from sorting clothes, to removing stains, loading the washer and dryer, to folding clothes and perhaps ironing. Place cleaning supplies in the rooms where they are used instead of storing them in a central location. If storage is not available, consider using a mobile caddie or cart to save trips.

Meal preparation normally takes place in the kitchen. Store baking and cooking utensils in a separate area and food near the mixing and food preparation center.



WHEN should a job be done?

Every individual goes through a regular cycle of energy during the course of a day. Many people have more energy in the morning, tapering off around noon. With a short early afternoon nap, they restore their energy levels until after dinner. Others have the opposite energy cycle, being fatigued in the morning and early afternoon, and increasing their energy levels in the late afternoon and early evening. Recognize your energy cycle, and take advantage of your tempo. Depending on your energy level, plan hardest and “A” priority tasks for times when you have the most energy. During your low energy period, plan for the next day, read or relax.



WHO should do a job?

Is this the best investment of your energy and time? Could another family member do it? Could the family afford to have someone else do it in the home or outside?

All tasks within a home are not the exclusive responsibility of the homemaker. Homemaking tasks can be shared by other family members. Even small children can assume some responsibilities, as well as a spouse or parent.

Include all family members in deciding who should do which job. Several job sharing systems could be tried, from drawing tasks out of a hat each week or month, to permanent job assignments. Availability of cleaning supplies such as a sponge near the bathroom sink might encourage family members to give the sink a wipe after each use.

Do not overlook the possibility of bartering or trading skills with a friend or neighbor. This alternative may be your only solution to work in or outside of your home. It might be the perfect solution to getting your oven cleaned, floor vacuumed or walls and windows washed.

HOW should a job be done?

Does equipment need to be adapted? Are new tools or appliances required? Will your family accept the finished product?

The answers to these questions focus on two aspects of housework: body mechanics and equipment. The first includes changes in body activities, motions, posture and sequencing of tasks. The second involves analyzing equipment according to the disability and adapting new equipment.

Understanding the body is important in work performance and personal energy expenditure. Body positions and motions are the key to effective body use.

Good Posture. Align body parts for stability and ease in performing tasks. When any part of your body gets out of line while working, additional muscular effort is required to maintain body balance. Using long-handled tools such as bathtub brushes, dustpans, dusters and a child's mop promote correct posture.

Muscles. Employ your strongest muscle. Use leg muscles, which are stronger than back and arm muscles, for lifting. Stand or kneel close to the load and lift with a steady pull.

Momentum. Avoid stops and starts, speed changes and sharp direction changes. Free, flowing motions are not as tiring as abrupt stops and starts. Slide instead of lift. Utilize casters on bottoms of stools or ironing boards. Use carts to transport items in your home. Canister and tank vacuum cleaners slide and may be more appropriate than upright. Use attachments for maximum use of your vacuum.

Center of Gravity. Your center of gravity is important in lifting, pushing, carrying a load and in reaching. Keep a heavy load near your body. Avoid lifting heavy objects by not placing them on the floor. When moving an object push at the center rather than on the top or bottom.

Sitting. Work cannot always be done in this position since standing may take less energy than getting up and down frequently for short jobs. Examine tasks and try sitting. A secretary's chair is excellent in the kitchen since it rolls easily, swivels and has a contoured back.

Sequence. Sequencing involves the progression of a task. Examine the order of steps in a task and combine or eliminate some of them. For example, store dishes in a place which will facilitate washing, drying and replacing.

Dovetailing. Fit tasks or steps of a task closer together. For example: empty the dishwasher and set the table; take clothes out of the dryer and fold them; or take sheets out of the dryer or off the line and put them back on the beds without folding them.

In learning to change body mechanics and sequencing of tasks, remember this verse:

Life by the yard
Is apt to be hard;
Life by the inch
Is more of a cinch.

Breaking a job into more manageable segments reduces the task.

Equipment. Examine the equipment you use for various tasks. Ask yourself these questions:

- Would the equipment be more convenient in another location? The best place for a washer and dryer is in the bathroom, but this may not be feasible. A freezer may be placed near the kitchen, dining room or bedroom.
- Are work centers too high? Do they provide enough work space?
- Do you need special equipment; a cutting board with suction feet, a canister vacuum cleaner, kitchen carts, mobile caddies or tongs for retrieving articles from the dryer, washer or floor?
- Which way do your doors swing? How much strength is required to open the door?
- Are there models more suitable to special needs such as a combination washer-dryer, a travel or lightweight iron, smooth top range or microwave oven?

- Can a piece of equipment be used for more than one purpose?
- Are machine switches and controls within easy reach?
- Is the control knob or dial easy to turn or activate?

Acceptance

Will your family members accept the finished product? A family must decide together what is really important, what standards are reasonable, realistic and what can be left undone. You and your family members may have to change attitudes. Remember, you, as a homemaker, have more ability than disability.

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