# Household Management: “Creating the Command Center”

Household management is a word filled with responsibility. Staying on top of everything that you personally have to do is a challenge – but managing all of your family members’ affairs can push you to your limits! What you really need is a household management “command center”. This is a place to store important information and help coordinate everyone’s activities.

## PICKING A LOCATION

The first step in creating your household management system is to choose the right location. It should be a high-traffic area of your home, where people are constantly passing by.

Make sure you that the space you choose has enough room for:

- a desk-type flat surface
- storage for files
- basic office supplies (pens, paper, envelopes, stamps, scissors, tape, etc.)
- space on the wall to hang a calendar & a bulletin board

Usually a nook in the kitchen or just off of your main living room is the ideal spot for a household management center.

## CENTRALIZING YOUR COMMUNICATIONS

In this hurried day and age, parents and children often pass like ships in the night and sometimes the only way to stay in touch is by leaving notes for each other. Set up a bulletin board or magnetic write-on/wipe-off board above your desk – designated JUST for communications (no posting of class pictures or drawings the kids did…you can find another spot for those).

Examples of messages you could leave include:

- a reminder for Johnny to take his soccer uniform with him to school
- a grocery list & appropriate coupons for the hubby’s shopping excursion
- Sally’s permission slip for today’s field trip

Just be sure to regularly clean off old messages to keep your board from getting overloaded.

## TRACKING EVERYONE’S SCHEDULES

While you’ve got your hammer and nails out, get a good-sized wall calendar and put it up right next to your bulletin board. The goal is to record every family member’s schedule in one centralized place – so you can review the entire household’s activities with one glance.

**Step 1:** Write each person’s appointments, deadlines, and other responsibilities with a different colored marker – blue for mom, green for dad, red for Sally, and purple for Johnny.

**Step 2:** Have a “family planning session” at the start of each week. Ask each person what they have coming up in the near future:

- extracurricular activities,
- days that your kids need a ride somewhere (as well as days you have to work late and can’t pick them up)

- school project due dates
- birthday invitations
- vacations
- dentist appointments

Everything discussed should go on the calendar.

## PROCESSING THE MAIL

Another part of your household management center is your incoming paperwork processing system. Set up a hanging file box or rack and create a folder for each type of “to-do” that you regularly encounter. These may include:

- to file
- to read
- to pay
- to call
- to sign and send back to school

Use a different color folder for each action. Every day as the mail comes in, you bring papers home from work, your children give you a new pile from school – take a minute to sort each item according to the next step you need to take. Put each document in the appropriate folder (and throw all the other junk away).

Now you’re ready to tackle your many responsibilities in an organized fashion. Sit down once a week and go through each folder, taking care of your to-do list in order.

## STORING IMPORTANT PAPERS

If you don’t already have a file drawer in your household management center, it’s a good idea to setup an expanding household organizer for your important papers. You can create one system for “fingertip files”. These are things you refer to often such as:

- phone directories
- class and team rosters
- babysitter instructions
- pre-printed grocery lists

You may also want to keep a separate system for those “monthly” files that you access when you pay bills and go through your to-do’s:

- utilities
- mortgage
- health records
- school paperwork
- files for your hobbies

A great way to organize these items is to use a sturdy poly expanding file, or a premium expanding file. Label each divider as needed. Thanks to your new household management system everything is accessible from one location and you don’t have to run around the house looking for supplies, files, and your schedule. Managing your household responsibilities will go much faster and be a lot less stressful!

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