

1923

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## Recommended Citation

Lindquist, Ruth M. (1923) "A Time Budget for the Homemaker," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 3 : No. 12 , Article 8.  
Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol3/iss12/8>

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# A Time Budget for the Homemaker

By RUTH M. LINDQUIST, Assistant Professor of Home Economics

THE QUESTION of shortening the working day is not one which concerns only the man who works in a mill or the woman in the factory. It is of quite as much importance for those who believe that the homemaker, with her three hundred and sixty-five day job, has an obligation to her community and state. Wise family financing is being increasingly emphasized because incomes, in the large majority of homes, are limited. For a similar reason, wise use of time needs as much consideration.

How to make an eight hour day yield the greatest returns in family and community well-being is not less of a problem than stretching a fifteen hundred dollar income to meet the needs of the entire family. The answer is not entirely in the hands of the manufacturer, tho he may help. Neither is it in the hands of the husband and the children, tho their cooperation is vital. Upon the homemakers themselves must rest, in a large measure, the solution of this important problem.

In using wisely the income, authorities on budgets suggest the value of keeping account of money spent. So, too, in the use of time it is well to know how time has been spent for such a record will enable one to go back over the week or the month and see very clearly what proportion of each day has been given to dishwashing, to care of the house, to personal upkeep, including rest, and to family and community relationships. Just as home records of expenditures often prove illuminating and cause one to change former habits, an analysis of daily activities over a short period of time reveals conditions which the homemaker would never have believed to exist.

Recently, such a study made by one farm woman showed a daily average of more than six hours on routine tasks such as cleaning, dishwashing, and food preparation, while but fifteen minutes were spent on dressing and relaxation for herself. No time was found for association with her five growing boys and the family table, where but forty-five minutes were spent for the three meals, could scarcely be considered even a possible substitute for these contacts. In this one instance, it is perhaps scarcely too much to say that the job of housekeeping had been substituted for the real business of living.

A money budget may be defined as a plan for spending, based upon the needs of the family and the probable income, which is made out in advance of spending. Its value in successful financing, whether for the home, the business, or the state is increasingly recognized. Likewise, the time budget takes into consideration the tasks which must be accomplished if the health, happiness and character-building goal of homemaking is attained.

Before it is possible to estimate the amount to be allowed for food in the money budget, one must know local prices, seasonal variations, and market conditions. So, too, in scheduling it is necessary to know how long a given piece of

work will require. Whether fifteen minutes or thirty minutes is necessary, will depend very largely upon a combination of factors. One woman can prepare a meal in an hour, while another will spend two hours on the same menu. One woman will have finished the daily care of the sleeping rooms in half the time required by a second.

The amount, kind and arrangement of equipment for food preparation, laundering, cleaning, and other household processes may shorten greatly the time needed. It is scarcely to the credit of the American homemaker that an observing business man of wide experience remarked within the last two years that it was far easier to sell a hat than a washing machine because the woman was convinced that the first was essential. No man thinks of opening an office without equipment, and his one question in selection has reference to need.

All too frequently, the woman bases her choice of home equipment solely upon cost and in so doing leaves out some of the most important tools or is content with those of inferior quality. The initial cost of a good steel knife may be higher but its period of service is much longer than that of the less expensive one. Linoleum on the kitchen floor may upon first thought seem reckless extravagance if the family income is limited, but if it conserves the health of the mother it is doubtless cheaper than a scrub brush plus the doctor bills.

Comparable in importance with the selection and arrangement of equipment is the actual method of doing a given task. The woman who spends twice as long in the daily cleaning of the sleeping rooms or in the preparation of a meal

may be using inadequate equipment. She may, however, be the type who does not use her head to save her heels. She is sometimes described as a "putterer" for she is so busy with unimportant details that she does not have time to get to the important things. The young bride, who washes her dishes three times in order to have them clean and then found it impossible to have the meals on time may be an exaggerated example, but one has only to look around to find other instances.

Frequently a lecturer or a writer reminds his audience of the monotony of housework and there is no one who would deny that this characteristic may be present. In some homes it is obvious; in others it is to be found only upon microscopic examination. In the latter type, it is because the pilot is a real manager who sees her destination and sets out to reach it by all of the possible short cuts.

She plans her menus for a week instead of meal by meal; she makes out an order list of staples and finds one trip for marketing sufficient instead of several together with numberless telephone calls; she thinks thru the work to be accomplished in a week, and sets about doing one-sixth—not more—each day. She is the person, curiously enough, who seems never to be overworked fall and spring when so many women are weary and haggard with the semi-annual house-cleaning and the whole family seems on the verge of a nervous collapse. The explanation is to be found in the one word—plan.

Finding the best way and the best time of day to do the essential tasks is a partial solution. Only when one follows continually that best way—once it has been found—is she really practicing efficiency. Scheduling or planning is of recognized importance in all railroad offices, but dispatching of the trains day in and day out, according to the proposed schedule, is quite as essential if wrecks are to be avoided. In the money budget, too, the plan is worthwhile only when one uses it as a guiding pattern. In like manner, the carefully planned time budget really functions and becomes invaluable in the job of homemaking when one makes a persistent effort to follow it. Always it should be remembered, however, that emergencies necessitate changes for no plan is infallible but it is safe to say that emergencies are handled the better because there has been a plan.

The importance of a time budget cannot be over-estimated. It means the substitution of essentials for non-essentials; of accomplishment for mere desire and oftentimes a higher standard of homemaking as well. By making possible personal relaxation and development of the woman herself, her ultimate contribution to the family and community is the greater. Finally, with the release of time from daily routine, there is free time to be used in accepting the privileges and responsibilities of the highest task given to women—that of homemaking and citizenship.

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## THE HILL

By Rupert Brooke

Breathless, we flung us on the windy hill.  
Laughed in the sun, and kissed the lovely grass.

You said, "Through glory and ecstasy we pass;

Wind, sun, and earth remain, the birds sing still,

When we are old, are old \* \* \*" "And when we die

All's over that is ours; and life burns on

Through other lovers, other lips," said I,  
"Heart of my heart, our heaven is now, is won!"

"We are Earth's best, that learnt her lesson here.

Life is our cry. We have kept the faith!" we said;

"We shall go down with reluctant tread

Rose-crowned into the darkness!" \* \* \*

Proud we were,  
And laughed, that had such brave, true things to say

—And then you suddenly cried and turned away.

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