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5 Ways to Make Meals Easier

Meal planning can feel like a lofty endeavor, but success relies on crafting a routine that is perfect for you -- whatever that looks like. Here are five steps to help you take control of meal planning and create a system that works for you and your family:

1. **Assess the upcoming week.** [How much time do you have to cook?](#) How many meals do you need? Some weeks may have time for three-course meals, while others may need to be all about the slow cooker with one-pot meals and casseroles, and that's okay.
2. **Set aside time to plan and shop.** Pick a time every week to browse recipes, make a comprehensive shopping list and schedule which meals you're eating on specific days. All three tasks don't have to happen on the same day, but it's important to set enough time aside so you don't feel the crunch.
3. **Buy fresh and frozen.** Fresh produce doesn't stay fresh forever, so if you don't plan on cooking it or putting it to use in the next few days, don't stock up. It will just go to waste. [Use frozen vegetables](#) like corn and peas for later in the week.
4. **Meal planning should make your life easier.** Don't forget to include family favorites

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or time savers, like a scheduled night for pizza or Chinese takeout. Plan for grilled cheese sandwiches or other quick fixes when an unexpectedly busy day calls for it!

5. **Befriend your freezer.** Cook enough for two meals in one session and freeze the leftovers for later. The Internet is full of [freezer-friendly recipes](#) to take on a test run. Though not everyone is a fan of eating leftovers, having meals partially prepared can take a night of cooking off your hands.

Happy cooking!

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