



## Keep a time log

In her book *168 Hours*, Vanderkam interviews dozens of happy, fulfilled people who are managing to do it all, including a mother of six who runs her own seven-figure construction company *and* still finds time to take walks along a babbling brook on a weekday morning.

How? Not by sleeping less but by viewing every minute as a choice, and actively choosing to do things that are meaningful and important to her.

Most of us, however, are a lot less aware of how we're spending our time, says Vanderkam. We putter around the house, check our emails every half-hour and spend hours mindlessly scrolling through Facebook.

To get a grip on how you're spending — or squandering — your time, Vanderkam suggests keeping a time log. By tracking your time over the course of a week (which adds up to 168 hours), you'll see where you're wasting time on low-value activities and can replace them with higher-value activities.

Most people who have tried this experiment are surprised to discover they have more time than they think, she says.

"Keeping a time log keeps you accountable for it," says Vanderkam. "What did I actually do between 7:30 and 11:30 this morning? Well, nothing. Once you know that, the truth sets us free and we can see we can make time for anything we want to make a priority."

- Visit Vanderkam's website for a spreadsheet on how to create a time log at [lauravanderkam.com/books/168-hours/](http://lauravanderkam.com/books/168-hours/)

## Get your pantry party ready

Now that your home's glowing and festive, get your pantry and fridge ready for those expected and unexpected guests. To keep holiday tasks stress-free, Shelley Davies, a professional organizer, plans ahead. Here are her tips for being food ready.

### PLAN AHEAD

- Create menus and ingredient lists for parties you're hosting.
- Shop in early December for non-perishable items.
- Clean out your fridge the first week of December to make room for holiday foods.
- Stock up on ingredients for holiday drinks: eggnog, cinnamon, nutmeg, hot chocolate, apple cider, champagne and coffee, etc.

### SIMPLIFY

- Have one signature drink throughout the holidays.
- Build a mini-bar of basics: red and white wine, beer and non-alcoholic drinks.
- Purchase frozen or pre-packaged appetizers that only need to be heated up and served on a plate with a sprig of holly.
- Fill your fridge with festive favourites that take under five minutes to prepare, such as humus, antipasto, cheeses, meats and savoury jams. For a quick, impressive appetizer, try crackers with cream cheese and a savoury jam.



## Schedule in social time — and do it even when you're not "feeling it"

Maybe mathematically there's enough time to do everything you want to do during the holidays. But sometimes, when the scheduled dinner date or Christmas karaoke party arrives, you just feel too spent to go.

Vanderkam advises pushing through and attending anyway. Chances are, if you've gone to the effort of making an appointment with family and friends, then it's likely important to you — and people feed off that energy.

"We draw energy from meaningful things," she says. "You never want to exercise, but you rarely regret having done it. It's the same thing."



## Book a weekend for holiday decorating

A big part of the holidays is welcoming family and friends into our homes. To be ready by mid-December, book a weekend in late November or early December to de-clutter and decorate, advises Shelley Davies, a professional organizer and owner of Details Modern Order in Vancouver.

### DAY 1

Davies recommends spending Day 1 of the weekend you've set aside cleaning and getting rid of clutter. First, decide on your home's focus entertaining areas, whether it's your entry, living room, kitchen or dining room. The goal is to have these areas always 10 minutes away from being "guest ready."

#### To start de-cluttering:

- Grab a garbage bag, recycling bag and laundry basket.
- Set the timer for 15 minutes and go room by room, filling the bags with anything that needs to go, be recycled, or moved to a different area.
- Return items in the laundry basket to their true homes when the timer goes off.
- Continue this for another 15 minutes until all the rooms are de-cluttered.
- Clean areas before putting up decorations. Now comes the fun part — decorating!

### DAY 2

Spend Day 2 dressing your home in a festive glow. To keep decor simple yet elegant:

- Decide on one holiday theme and select complementary colours.
- Pick one to three main focal points to showcase your holiday spirit. Maybe it's your tree, dining-room table, entryway or mantle.
- Add simple holiday touches in other areas with candles, pine cones, fruit bowls, fresh flowers, holly sprigs or tea lights. Voila! Your home is good to go.