

FIELD NOTE 00

# The Catch-Up Map

Find what needs attention first — and what can wait.

00

/

06

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## OUTCOME

You leave with three priorities and a seven-day starting plan.

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01

02

03

04

05

06

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# Start here

A long marriage creates systems.

Some responsibilities are obviously divided. One person handles certain bills. The other keeps track of school. One books more of the travel. One remembers the dentist. One notices when the laundry detergent is running low.

Other systems are almost invisible until they disappear.

That division was not a failure. It was how two people ran one life.

Then the relationship ends.

The system disappears. The tasks do not.

At the same time, the world kept moving. You may not have booked a solo trip in twenty years. You may not have bought clothes with only yourself in mind. You may not know whether people call, text, use WhatsApp, use an app, or somehow expect everyone to know what a current profile photo looks like.

## Nothing is wrong with your competence. The system changed.

This map shows you where the gaps are, which three matter first, and what to do this week.

**You can use this without reading the whole bundle.** Choose one area if you already know what keeps catching you out, or use the full map if several things need attention. Answer for the life you are actually running now, including the routines that already work.

When a result opens a section, read its explanation and example before using the checklist. The checklist is a way to check your setup, not a test of whether you are a capable adult. Choose one task, do its first step, and leave the rest for another session.

### DO THIS FIRST

### You will leave with:

- six system scores;
- three priorities;
- a new ownership map;
- a seven-day starting plan.

## How the scoring works

There are six systems because there are six core playbooks.

Each system has five YES/NO questions.

YES = 1 point

NO = 0 points

Score each system separately.

These scores are a sorting aid based on your answers, not a diagnosis or a comparison with other men. A high score does not mean you need to improve every remaining detail. A low score tells you where to look, not how long a change should take.

Do not add the six scores together.

## SYSTEM STATES

0-1 — NOT SET UP YET

This system still depends heavily on improvisation, avoidance or somebody else.

## 2-3 — WORKING

The basics exist, but repeated friction remains.

## 4-5 — UNDER CONTROL

The system works reliably enough that it rarely consumes unnecessary attention.

|    |            |    |             |
|----|------------|----|-------------|
| 01 | Your Place | 02 | Your Week   |
| 03 | Life Admin | 04 | Your People |
| 05 | Your Look  | 06 | Normal Now  |

| <div>01</div> <div>SYSTEM 01</div> <div>Your Place</div> <div>_____/5</div>                                                      |                                                                                                              |                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1                                                                                                                                | I can sleep, eat, wash, work and relax at home without regularly discovering something essential is missing. | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 2                                                                                                                                | The main rooms feel intentional rather than temporary.                                                       | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 3                                                                                                                                | I know what I need to buy next — and what I am deliberately waiting to buy.                                  | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 4                                                                                                                                | Cleaning, laundry and household supplies have a basic rhythm.                                                | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 5                                                                                                                                | If somebody came over tonight, I would feel comfortable with how the place functions.                        | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| <div>STATE</div> <div>Recent friction: _____</div> <div>Repeated? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</div> |                                                                                                              |                              |
| IF THIS IS LOW                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                              |                              |
| <div>02</div> <div>SYSTEM 02</div> <div>Your Week</div> <div>_____/5</div>                                                       |                                                                                                              |                              |
| 1                                                                                                                                | I know what a normal workday looks like outside working hours.                                               | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 2                                                                                                                                | Groceries, laundry, cleaning and basic admin have recurring places in the week.                              | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 3                                                                                                                                | My weekends usually contain at least one thing I chose in advance.                                           | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 4                                                                                                                                | Work does not automatically expand into most unscheduled time.                                               | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 5                                                                                                                                | If I have children, both kid-weeks and non-kid-weeks have a workable rhythm.                                 | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| <div>STATE</div> <div>Recent friction: _____</div> <div>Repeated? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</div> |                                                                                                              |                              |
| IF THIS IS LOW                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                              |                              |
| Put one Home, one Food, one Body, one People and one Admin anchor into next week using 02 — Your Week.                           |                                                                                                              |                              |

| <div>03</div> <div>SYSTEM 03</div> <div>Life Admin</div> <div>____/5</div>                                                       |                                                                                                 |                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1                                                                                                                                | I know my recurring bills, subscriptions and important renewal dates.                           | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 2                                                                                                                                | Important appointments and recurring responsibilities are on a system rather than in my memory. | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 3                                                                                                                                | I know what is due on the car, home, insurance and health side.                                 | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 4                                                                                                                                | I can locate important documents without searching through old emails and boxes.                | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 5                                                                                                                                | There are no important tasks still happening only because my former partner reminds me.         | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| <div>STATE</div> <div>Recent friction: _____</div> <div>Repeated? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</div> |                                                                                                 |                              |
| IF THIS IS LOW                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                 |                              |
| <div>04</div> <div>SYSTEM 04</div> <div>Your People</div> <div>____/5</div>                                                      |                                                                                                 |                              |
| 1                                                                                                                                | I have friends or family I see independently of being part of a couple.                         | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 2                                                                                                                                | I have at least one recurring social activity or social anchor.                                 | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 3                                                                                                                                | There is somebody I can contact without needing a special reason.                               | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 4                                                                                                                                | I occasionally initiate plans instead of waiting for invitations.                               | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 5                                                                                                                                | I have at least one environment where I repeatedly see the same people.                         | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| <div>STATE</div> <div>Recent friction: _____</div> <div>Repeated? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</div> |                                                                                                 |                              |
| IF THIS IS LOW                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                 |                              |
| Send one reconnection message and choose one recurring social environment using 04 — Your People.                                |                                                                                                 |                              |

| <div>05</div> <div>SYSTEM 05</div> <div>Your Look</div> <div>_____/5</div>                                                       |                                                                                               |                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1                                                                                                                                | The clothes I wear regularly fit the body I have now.                                         | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 2                                                                                                                                | I have a reliable outfit for casual, smart casual, dinner/date and an event.                  | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 3                                                                                                                                | My shoes, glasses, haircut and grooming feel current enough.                                  | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 4                                                                                                                                | I have removed obvious items I only wear because they technically still fit.                  | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 5                                                                                                                                | I know the difference between looking current and trying to look younger.                     | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| <div>STATE</div> <div>Recent friction: _____</div> <div>Repeated? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</div> |                                                                                               |                              |
| IF THIS IS LOW                                                                                                                   |                                                                                               |                              |
| <div>06</div> <div>SYSTEM 06</div> <div>Normal Now</div> <div>_____/5</div>                                                      |                                                                                               |                              |
| 1                                                                                                                                | Current messaging habits do not regularly make me overthink normal interactions.              | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 2                                                                                                                                | Digital bookings, tickets, travel and payments do not create unnecessary friction.            | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 3                                                                                                                                | I have at least one current photo I am happy to use.                                          | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 4                                                                                                                                | I understand the basic etiquette of group chats, invitations and modern social planning.      | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| 5                                                                                                                                | If I chose to date, the current environment would feel unfamiliar but not completely foreign. | <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> |
| <div>STATE</div> <div>Recent friction: _____</div> <div>Repeated? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</div> |                                                                                               |                              |
| IF THIS IS LOW                                                                                                                   |                                                                                               |                              |
| Write down the three modern situations that make you feel most out of practice and start with the one you encounter most often.  |                                                                                               |                              |

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# The friction test

Scores show which systems are weak.

Friction shows which ones are costing you attention now.

Examples:

- I had no clean shirt ten minutes before leaving.
- I forgot a school message.
- I spent Friday night working because I had no plan.
- I had no idea when the car service was due.
- I wanted to call an old friend and did not know what to say.
- I needed a photo and hated every current photo I had.

## Friction 1

\_\_\_\_\_ Repeated? YES / NO

## Friction 2

\_\_\_\_\_ Repeated? YES / NO

## Friction 3

\_\_\_\_\_ Repeated? YES / NO

**One bad evening is not a system problem. The same bad evening four times is.**

# Critical overrides

Check any foundation problem that applies now.

## ☐ Your Place override

- My sleep setup is unreliable.
- Kitchen or bathroom basics are materially missing.
- My home is still materially non-functional.

## ☐ Life Admin override

- Important bills or renewals are unknown.
- Important documents cannot be located.
- Child, health, car or home obligations are being missed.

## ☐ Your Week override

- Work fills most unscheduled time.
- Groceries, laundry or cleaning repeatedly become emergencies.
- Open weekends repeatedly leave me frustrated or directionless.

**If any override is checked, move that system into Priority 1 or 2.**

# Your Catch-Up Map

01 02 03 04 05 06



01  
**Your Place**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ /5

STATE:

REPEATED ▢



02  
**Your Week**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ /5

STATE:

REPEATED ▢



03  
**Life Admin**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ /5

STATE:

REPEATED ▢



04  
**Your People**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ /5

STATE:

REPEATED ▢



05  
**Your Look**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ /5

STATE:

REPEATED ▢



06  
**Normal Now**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ /5

STATE:

REPEATED ▢

START HERE

**Priority 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

First action: \_\_\_\_\_

## PRIORITY RULES

Lowest score.

Critical override can promote Place, Week or Life Admin.

Repeated friction breaks a tie.

If still tied: Place → Week → Life Admin → People → Look → Normal Now.

# Your three priorities

Use the Catch-Up Map. Lowest score comes first. Repeated friction breaks a tie. A critical override can promote Place, Week or Life Admin.

PRIORITY 1

Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Score: \_\_\_\_ / 5

Why now: \_\_\_\_\_

First action: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PRIORITY 2

Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Score: \_\_\_\_ / 5

Why now: \_\_\_\_\_

First action: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PRIORITY 3

Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Score: \_\_\_\_ / 5

Why now: \_\_\_\_\_

First action: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The ownership reset  
The next question is not:

Who did more?

It is:

Which systems changed ownership?

Home & personal

| AREA                | MINE BEFORE | SHARED | THEIRS BEFORE | NEW TO ME |
|---------------------|-------------|--------|---------------|-----------|
| Bills               |             |        |               |           |
| Groceries           |             |        |               |           |
| Cooking             |             |        |               |           |
| Cleaning            |             |        |               |           |
| Laundry             |             |        |               |           |
| Car admin           |             |        |               |           |
| Health appointments |             |        |               |           |

Family & life admin

| AREA              | MINE BEFORE | SHARED | THEIRS BEFORE | NEW TO ME |
|-------------------|-------------|--------|---------------|-----------|
| Family calendar   |             |        |               |           |
| Social planning   |             |        |               |           |
| Gifts / birthdays |             |        |               |           |
| Travel planning   |             |        |               |           |
| Kids' logistics   |             |        |               |           |
| Home maintenance  |             |        |               |           |
| Documents         |             |        |               |           |

SCENARIO / WORKED EXAMPLE

**Situation** You always handled money and the car. Your former partner handled most social plans, school reminders and travel booking.

**Wrong conclusion** "I am terrible at organizing life."

**Better conclusion** You are competent in the systems you owned. You now need a system for the ones you inherited.

Turn ownership into action

Take every item marked THEIRS BEFORE or NEW TO ME and assign:

Start with the responsibility that next needs action. You can return for the others. Use **DO** for a one-off task, **AUTOMATE** for a suitable repeat process you have checked, **CALENDAR** for a reminder you will act on, **OUTSOURCE** for a task you choose to pay somebody to handle, or **LEARN** when you first need instructions. A reminder is not an automatic payment or a completed task.

- DO
- AUTOMATE
- CALENDAR
- OUTSOURCE
- LEARN

| RESPONSIBILITY | NEW DESTINATION | FIRST STEP |
|----------------|-----------------|------------|
|                |                 |            |
|                |                 |            |
|                |                 |            |
|                |                 |            |
|                |                 |            |

You are not recreating the old system. You are deciding who owns the new one.

EXAMPLE

Worked example: the car renewal reminder used to come from somebody else.

You open Life Admin because you cannot say what is due next. You do not need to reorganize every account today.

- Find the actual renewal notice or check the provider account. If you cannot find the date, your first task is to contact the provider, not guess.
- Open **Practical tools**, then the **Life Admin register**. Write the responsibility, the person responsible, the verified date or where to check it, and the next action. Keep policy numbers and other private identifiers out of the register.
- Add an action reminder to the calendar you already use. Allow enough time for whatever the provider requires; the register itself does not send reminders.
- Stop when you can answer: what needs doing, who will do it, and where the next action is recorded.

For a shared responsibility, confirm the arrangement first. This example is about recording ownership, not changing an agreement or account.

# Your personalized seven-day plan

## DAY 1 · PRIORITY 1

Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Starter action: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## DAY 2 · PRIORITY 2

Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Starter action: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## DAY 3 · PRIORITY 3

Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Starter action: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## DAY 4 · MAKE ONE VISIBLE IMPROVEMENT

Return to Priority 1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## DAY 5 · LEAVE THE HOUSE ON PURPOSE

Social / physical / useful / explore:

\_\_\_\_\_

#### DAY 6 · REMOVE RECURRING FRICTION

Home or admin action: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### DAY 7 · 20-MINUTE REVIEW

What is easier? \_\_\_\_\_

What still creates friction? \_\_\_\_\_

Which module comes next? \_\_\_\_\_

## Quick module reference

| IF YOUR PROBLEM SOUNDS LIKE...                       | OPEN                            |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| "This place still feels temporary."                  | 01 — Your Place                 |
| "My week has no shape."                              | 02 — Your Week                  |
| "I keep forgetting things that used to just happen." | 03 — Life Admin                 |
| "My social life belonged to the couple."             | 04 — Your People                |
| "I don't know what looks current anymore."           | 05 — Your Look                  |
| "When did this become the normal way to do it?"      | 06 — What Normal Looks Like Now |

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# FAQ

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## QUICK ANSWERS

**01 Do I need to complete the modules in order?**

No. Use your three priorities. If home, weekly rhythm or essential life admin are materially unstable, fix those foundations first.

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**02 What if I handled almost everything during the marriage?**

Then your gap may be small in home/admin and larger in social life, appearance or current social rules.

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**03 What if I am not legally divorced yet?**

The system is about the life you are actually running, not legal status.

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**04 What if I do not have children?**

Ignore child-specific branches.

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**05 What if I am not interested in dating?**

Fine. Dating is not the core system.

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**06 What if every score is already 4 or 5?**

Use the system as a reference library.

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# You're done when...

## YOU'RE DONE WHEN

- ☐ You have six module scores.
- ☐ You can see your six systems on one Catch-Up Map.
- ☐ You have identified three real priorities.
- ☐ You know which repeated frictions matter.
- ☐ You know which responsibilities changed ownership.
- ☐ Every inherited responsibility has a new destination.
- ☐ You have a personalized seven-day plan.

**OPEN NEXT** Your Priority 1 module.



FIELD NOTE 01

# Your Place

Turn the place you landed in into a home that actually works.

01

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06

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OUTCOME

You have a workable home baseline and know which practical improvement comes next.

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# A home is a system before it is a style

A new place after a long marriage can look deceptively simple.

You have a bed. A sofa. A television. Some plates. Technically, you live there.

Then ordinary life starts testing the system.

You realise you do not own a decent pan. The only towels are the ones you grabbed during the move. There is no place for paperwork. You have three phone chargers and no extension lead where you actually need one. Your children arrive and there is nowhere for their things. You buy a coffee table because the room looks empty, then discover what you actually needed was storage.

The goal of this module is not to create an impressive apartment.

It is to create a place that makes daily life easier.

**Start with the room that interrupted your day most recently.** If you already have a working home, skip the shopping lists and use the room-by-room check to find one remaining snag. If you rent a room, live with family or expect another move, apply the same checks only to the space and decisions you control.

Your first useful result is specific: "I can get ready tomorrow without searching for clean clothes," rather than "I need to sort the house out."

## DO THIS FIRST

You are building in three stages:

**MINIMUM** — the place functions.

**COMFORTABLE** — daily friction is low.

**DONE** — the home feels intentional enough that you stop thinking about it.

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## The first 72 hours

If you are newly moved, ignore decoration.

Get these systems working first. "72 hours" is a starting sequence, not a deadline or a requirement to buy everything at once.

**Before shopping:** walk through tonight and tomorrow morning. Where will you sleep, wash, eat and put used clothes? Gather usable things you already own. Then buy or borrow only what blocks those ordinary actions. The lists below are reference options, not a mandatory basket.

# Sleep

Make the bed before tackling another room. Put tomorrow's clothes within reach, place a basket where you actually undress, and check the light and charger from the bed. If buying a second set of bedding must wait, choose a washing day with enough time for it to dry. The useful test is a normal evening and morning, not how the bedroom photographs.

| ACTION LIST              |                                      |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Proper bed or mattress               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Two sets of sheets                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Two pillows that are actually usable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Duvet/blanket appropriate to climate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bedside light                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Phone charging point                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Laundry basket                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Curtains/blinds if required          |

The second set of sheets matters more than almost anything decorative in the bedroom.

One set means laundry becomes a deadline.

Two sets means laundry becomes a system.

# Bathroom

Set out the items you use every morning and give the rest a drawer or container. Put a spare of the thing you most often run out of beside the current supply, so taking the spare prompts a replacement on your shopping list. If space or money is tight, start with toilet paper, soap and a usable towel, then build from actual use.

| ACTION LIST              |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Two full towel sets       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hand towels               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bath mat                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Toilet brush              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Basic cleaning product    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Toilet paper reserve      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Soap                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Shampoo / grooming basics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bin                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | First-aid basics          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Spare toothbrush          |

A useful rule:

**If running out of it at 7 a.m. would annoy you, keep one spare.**

## Kitchen minimum

You do not need a chef's kitchen.

Start with the equipment for two or three meals you already like making. Trace each meal from preparation to washing up: knife, pan, plate and somewhere to store any extra portion. Cross-check that route against the list below. A pot you never use can wait; a missing tin opener that blocks tonight's meal cannot.

## ACTION LIST

- |                          |                                |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Chef's knife                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Small knife                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cutting board                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Frying pan                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Medium saucepan                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Large pot                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Baking tray                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Spatula                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Wooden/silicone spoon          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Tongs                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Colander                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Tin opener                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bottle opener                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Measuring jug                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Four plates                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Four bowls                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Four glasses                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Four mugs                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cutlery for four               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Food storage containers        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Tea towels                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dish soap / dishwasher tablets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bin bags                       |

Why four?

Four is an example that leaves room for visitors and dishes waiting to be washed. Use a smaller set if you have limited storage or no need to host. Keep what already works rather than buying matching replacements.

## Cleaning minimum

The mistake is buying fifteen products.

You need a small system. Choose one place for the supplies, then clean in a repeatable order: put loose items away, clean surfaces, deal with floors. Use the product instructions for the surface and task. A scheduled small clean is more useful than a cupboard of supplies you avoid opening.

| JOB      | MINIMUM TOOL                    |
|----------|---------------------------------|
| Floors   | Vacuum or broom + mop           |
| Surfaces | Multipurpose cleaner + cloths   |
| Bathroom | Bathroom cleaner + brush/sponge |
| Kitchen  | Degreaser or suitable cleaner   |
| Glass    | Glass cleaner or microfiber     |
| Laundry  | Detergent + stain treatment     |
| Rubbish  | Correct bin bags                |



**WATCH OUT**

If you do not know what a product is for, do not buy it because the packaging makes it look essential. Follow its label and never mix cleaning products. CDC cleaning guidance.

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## The 30-day setup

**If your result sent you here because cleaning, laundry or supplies keep catching you out, start with one repeat task.** Choose the task, the next realistic slot and the supplies it needs. Add that slot to your own calendar, with a smaller alternative for a busy day.

For example: “Tuesday after dinner: one laundry load; check detergent before starting. If work runs late, move the load to Wednesday morning.” Use your actual routine and appliance instructions, including being available to finish the load. A reminder works only if the job has a workable place in the day.

Record the task, timing and fallback in Weekly Anchors. After the next attempt, keep the slot if it worked or move it if it repeatedly conflicts with your week. Home rhythm shows how to connect groceries, cleaning and laundry without planning the entire household at once.

Once the home functions, solve the repeated friction.

For 30 days, keep a note called:

**"Annoying Things About This Place."**

Every time you think:

I need somewhere to put this.

Why is there no light here?

I keep walking to the other room for that.

I hate where the keys end up.

The laundry has no system.

I never know where documents are.

write it down.

Review the note once a week; you do not need to tolerate a missing essential for a month. Beside each problem, write how often it happened and what you tried before buying.

**Example:** "Keys missing three mornings. Tried a bowl by the entrance; problem stopped." That costs nothing if you already own a bowl. "No place for children's coats on both visits" may justify hooks, subject to your rental rules.

By the end of the month, choose the remaining problem with the biggest effect on ordinary days. Measure the available space, set a spending limit that fits your budget, and compare solutions to that one problem. Stop when the problem is solved; the note is not a shopping challenge.

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## Room-by-room baseline

This is a walkthrough, not a score for how grown-up your home looks. **Minimum** means the daily task works; **comfortable** means it works with less searching or rearranging; **done** means it is good enough for your present life. You can stop at minimum while money, time or housing is uncertain.

Choose one room. Physically try its ordinary task, notice the first obstacle, and fix or record that obstacle before moving on. The lists are prompts; the instructions beneath them show what to do with a gap.

# Bedroom

**Try tomorrow morning now.** Find clean underwear, an outfit, shoes and a towel. If clothes are in several places, collect today's regularly used items into one drawer or rail. Put the laundry basket at the point where clothes otherwise land. Separate "wear again" clothes from dirty laundry with one hook or shelf.

For sleep, lie down and check what actually bothers you: light, an inaccessible switch, a missing blanket or nowhere to charge. Solve the observed issue with what you have before changing the room's style.

## Minimum

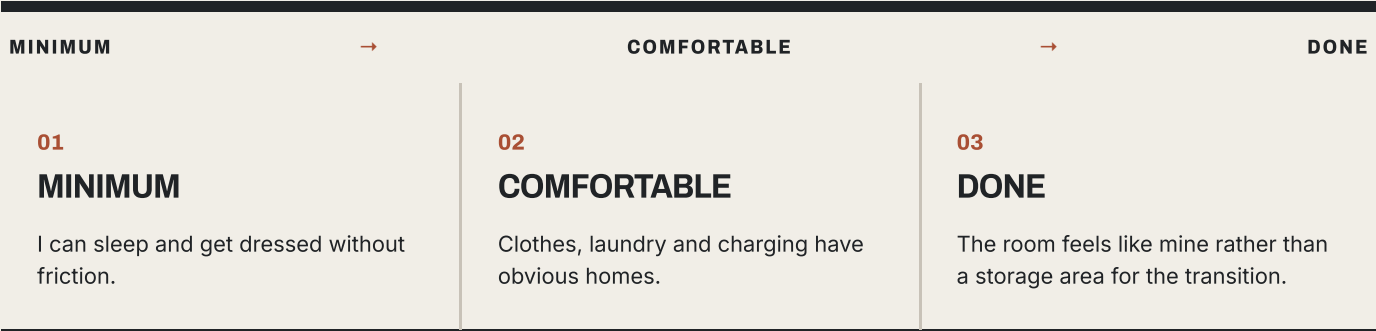
- sleep properly;
- clothing stored;
- clean sheets available;
- enough darkness;
- charging.

## Comfortable

- bedside surfaces;
- decent lighting;
- full-length mirror;
- predictable laundry route.

## Done

- no moving boxes;
- no chair permanently covered in clothes;
- nothing from the old relationship kept purely because you have not decided what to do with it.



# Bathroom

**Walk through a shower and getting ready.** Can you reach a dry towel, find your daily products and put used items away? Keep daily toiletries together and occasional items separately. Choose a place for used towels to dry according to their care instructions. Put "replace soap" on your shopping list when you open the spare, not after both are empty.

If the counter stays cluttered, remove products you do not use and try a container you already own before buying storage. "Done" can be a simple clean shared bathroom with your own kit stored together.

Minimum:

- daily toiletries;
- towels;
- cleaning;
- toilet supplies.

Comfortable:

- grooming tools organised;
- spare essentials;
- medicines/first aid contained.

Done:

- surfaces are mostly clear;
- guest towel exists;
- nothing routinely runs out.

## Kitchen

**Make one familiar meal and clean up after it.** The missing steps reveal more than an equipment catalogue. If chopping space is blocked, clear one preparation area. Put the pan and utensils for your usual meal where you can reach them. Choose one place for food containers and lids.

Next, write the ingredients for that meal on a reusable shopping list. The food rhythm guide shows how to turn a few meals into a small shop for one. If hosting is irrelevant, your own meals and easy cleaning are a sufficient finish line.

Minimum:

- cook basic meals;
- store food;
- clean easily.

Comfortable:

- pantry baseline;
- repeatable grocery list;
- freezer containers;
- basic spices/oil.

Done:

you can host two to four people without buying disposable plates on the way home.

## Living room

Choose what you want this room to do most often: read, watch something, talk with a visitor or spend time with your children. Sit where you would do that. Check the light, a place for a drink and what must be moved before the room is usable.

Move existing furniture first. Give recurring clutter one home, such as a basket for games or a drawer for cables. **Example:** if every visit starts with clearing work papers from the sofa, the first improvement is a paper tray elsewhere, not a new sofa.

Minimum:

somewhere comfortable to sit;  
working lighting.

Comfortable:

side table;  
storage;  
throw/blanket;  
usable TV/audio if wanted.

Done:

the room has one clear purpose beyond "place where furniture happened to fit".

## Entryway

Use the route you naturally take when you get home. Put a bowl, tray or hook on that route for the things in your hands. Test it by coming in with your usual bag and coat. If you bypass the new storage, move it to where you actually stop rather than relying on a better habit.

Create permanent homes for:

keys;  
wallet;  
sunglasses;  
bag;  
shoes;  
post.

The goal is not style.

The goal is:

## You know the first place to look for the items you use every day.

**Finish this walkthrough with one recorded action.** For example: "Bedroom | clean clothes are split across boxes | move this week's clothes into the empty drawer | next." Do that action, then repeat the normal task to check whether it helped.

Open your home baseline to record the room, what is missing and the next practical action.

---

## Buy now / buy later

Use this when the home feels unfinished and several purchases compete for attention. **Describe the job before the item:** "I need somewhere dry for towels," not "I need a bathroom makeover." Check whether moving, repairing, borrowing or reusing something already solves it.

Keep your Buy Now / Buy Later list. Name the gap first, then decide whether you need to buy anything.

### Buy now when...

These are reasons to consider a purchase, not a rule that weekly use automatically makes it affordable. Check the total cost, dimensions and permission requirements before committing.

- you use it at least weekly;
- lack of it creates repeated friction;
- replacing a bad version will save time;
- it affects sleep, food, hygiene or work;
- it prevents buying disposable replacements.

### Buy later when...

Write the item on the "Later" list with the condition that would make it useful, such as "after the next move" or "if two trial visits show we need another chair." This lets you postpone a decision without repeatedly reopening it.

- you are filling visual emptiness;
- you are buying for an imagined lifestyle;
- you cannot describe the exact problem it solves;
- you have lived there less than two weeks and the item is decorative;

you are trying to recreate the old house immediately.

#### SCENARIO / WORKED EXAMPLE

**Situation:** The living room looks bare.

**Impulse purchase:** Large expensive coffee table.

**Actual repeated problem:** No storage for cables, paperwork and children's things.

**Better purchase:** Storage cabinet first. Coffee table later if the room still needs one.

You are finished when each current purchase has a problem, a decision and a next step. "Use the existing box for cables and reconsider next month" is a valid completed decision.

---

## The "temporary flat" signals

Use this section only if your place feels unsettled to you. Sparse rooms, borrowed furniture or a short tenancy are not failures. The question is whether the temporary arrangement interferes with daily life or prevents you using the space as you want.

These are possible prompts, not defects you must eliminate:

- boxes remain visible for months;
- there is only one set of basics;
- walls and lighting are ignored;
- everything is black, grey or chosen solely because it was fast;
- there is no storage;
- there is nowhere for another person to sit/eat;
- your children's things arrive in bags and leave in bags;
- every room looks like it could be vacated in one afternoon.

You do not need interior design.

Choose one sign of intention that suits your budget and tenure. Unpacking the items you use every day, clearing a table or putting up an existing photo can be enough. Portable changes are sensible when another move is likely.

## Five inexpensive signals of intention

- Matching or coordinated towels.
- Proper bedside lamps.
- One framed print/photo/art object per main room.
- Storage that hides clutter.
- A table surface that can actually be used.

Pick one, use what you already own where possible, and live with it for a few days. Keep the change if it makes the room more usable or more yours. There is no required colour scheme or amount of decoration.

---

## If your children stay with you

If your children stay, aim to make ordinary routines possible without unpacking their whole life each time. Start with the next visit rather than trying to duplicate an entire second household.

The exact arrangement depends on age and custody, but the principle is simple:

### Reduce how much of their life has to travel in a bag.

Ask what they looked for or had to bring last time. For younger children, check practical needs with the responsible adult; older children can tell you which few items matter most. Agree what stays and what travels so important school or comfort items do not disappear between homes.

The list below is conditional. **Medication is not a casual duplicate purchase:** follow the existing prescription and storage instructions, and clarify any arrangement with the relevant caregiver and pharmacist or clinician. Do not change doses or split supplies based on this guide.

Consider duplicating:

| ACTION LIST              |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Toothbrush/toiletries        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pyjamas                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Basic casual clothing        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Chargers                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | School stationery            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Medication where appropriate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Favourite breakfast basics   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Towels                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hair/grooming items          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Simple entertainment         |

If possible, give them:

a drawer;  
shelf;  
hook;  
bedside space;  
permanent place for school things.

In a small home, a labelled drawer or basket can be their permanent space. Show them where it is and let them choose the arrangement when practical. After the next stay, ask what was missing and add only the item that would have made that visit easier.

---

## The basic home maintenance baseline

You do not need to become a handyman.

You do need to know what exists.

Start with a walkthrough with the landlord, building manager or someone qualified where necessary. **Locate and record; do not experiment with unfamiliar equipment.** Ask for the correct instructions and the contact for problems. If you cannot verify an item, write "ask building manager" as the next action

instead of guessing.

Create a one-page Home Baseline:

| ITEM                      | WHERE IS IT? | WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW? |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Main water shutoff        |              |                         |
| Electrical panel          |              |                         |
| Heating controls          |              |                         |
| Smoke alarms              |              |                         |
| Internet router           |              |                         |
| Main appliance manuals    |              |                         |
| Spare keys                |              |                         |
| Landlord/building contact |              |                         |
| Waste/recycling rules     |              |                         |
| Basic tools               |              |                         |

If renting, add:

- who to call;
- what you are responsible for;
- what requires permission.

Keep the page somewhere you can retrieve quickly, such as beside your home documents. Add manufacturer or building instructions for checks and servicing rather than inventing intervals. The useful completion test is being able to find the right instruction or contact when something needs attention, not being able to repair it yourself.

---

## The 12-tool baseline

Treat this as a reference list, not a requirement to purchase twelve things. Start with the simple job you actually intend to do and the correct tool for it. Borrowing a tool for one job may be enough.

A reasonable basic kit:

- screwdriver set;
- adjustable wrench;

pliers;  
hammer;  
tape measure;  
utility knife;  
spirit level;  
torch;  
hex keys;  
small drill/driver if appropriate;  
extension lead;  
spare batteries.

You do not need a workshop.

For a simple loose handle, for example, identify the correct screwdriver, follow the item's instructions and stop if the fitting is damaged or you are unsure. Keep tools together so the next small job does not begin with a search.

Owning a tool does not make every job suitable for DIY. Leave electrical, gas, structural and other unfamiliar safety-critical work to a qualified person. For rentals, check permission before drilling or altering fixtures. Buy an extension lead only if appropriate for the equipment and use it according to its rating and instructions.

---

## The five-box declutter

Do not try to “process the past” through your possessions.

Choose one small area, such as a drawer or a single box, so you can finish without covering the whole room. Prepare the categories below using bags or labels if you do not have boxes. Only sort possessions you are entitled to decide about; set aside shared, disputed or other people's property for an agreed process.

Use functional categories:

KEEP HERE  
STORE  
RETURN  
DONATE / SELL  
DECIDE LATER

The fifth box has a deadline.

Write a date on it, ideally 30–60 days.

Use that date to review the decision, not as permission to discard something automatically. Important documents and sentimental items may need a separate, slower decision.

**Example:** unused spare cables go into KEEP HERE only if you identify a current use; an agreed borrowed item goes into RETURN with a message to its owner; an uncertain photo album goes into DECIDE LATER. Finish by putting the keep items away and arranging the return or donation. A sorted pile left in the doorway is still an unfinished job.

---

## Hosting baseline

You do not need to become the person who hosts dinner parties.

If you want visitors, make the next visit easy to say yes to. You can meet elsewhere if your housing or privacy makes hosting impractical.

Choose a modest first occasion: coffee for one friend, with a clear start time. Walk the route a guest will use: entrance, seat, drink, bathroom. Clear only what blocks that visit and check you have the supplies for what you offered. Dinner equipment can wait if you are serving coffee.

Baseline:

- four plates;
- four glasses;
- seating;
- coffee/tea;
- water;
- bathroom that is not embarrassing;
- somewhere to hang a jacket;
- clean hand towel.

This is not about impressing anybody.

It is about the home supporting your social life instead of limiting it.

**Example:** "Coffee at mine Saturday at 11? I've got about an hour." Two clean mugs, somewhere to sit and a usable bathroom are enough for that plan. Finish when the home supports the invitation you actually intend to send, not an imagined dinner party.

---

# FAQ

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## QUICK ANSWERS

**01**     **Should I replace everything from the old house?**

No. Replace what does not fit the new space, carries unnecessary friction, or clearly belongs to the old setup rather than your current life.

---

**02**     **How much should I spend furnishing the place?**

Set a total you can afford first, then prioritise what blocks sleep, meals, hygiene or work. Check what you own and what can be borrowed. A comfortable mattress or work chair may matter more to you than decoration, but this is a priority decision, not a reason to exceed your budget.

---

**03**     **Should I use an interior designer?**

Only if design matters to you and the cost is comfortable. This module is designed to get you to a strong functional baseline without one.

---

**04**     **What if my place is temporary?**

Make the daily routines work with portable, low-cost changes. You may sensibly postpone large furniture or decoration when the next move is near. Minimum is a valid stopping point.

---

**05**     **What if I hate shopping for home things?**

Create a list by problem, not category. Buy in one or two concentrated sessions.

---

# You're done when...

Use the list as a practical review, not a demand for a perfect home. Re-run an ordinary morning, meal and laundry cycle. Where something still fails, record one next action. Skip hosting or children's arrangements if they do not apply; interpret "no longer temporary" as usable and intentional enough for your current situation.

## YOU'RE DONE WHEN

- ☐ You can sleep, cook, wash and work without improvising.
- ☐ Every main room has a clear function.
- ☐ You own backups of the essentials that create deadlines when missing.
- ☐ You know what you still need to buy and what you are deliberately delaying.
- ☐ Important home systems are documented.
- ☐ If your children stay, they have permanent space and basics.
- ☐ The place no longer looks like you moved in last weekend.

FIELD NOTE 02

# Your Week

Build a week that runs even when nobody else is structuring it.

02

/

06

---

## OUTCOME

You have a workable plan for everyday tasks, evenings and the weekend, with smaller alternatives when plans change.

---

# The calendar used to fill itself

Long marriages create automatic structure.

Work has a rhythm. Children have a rhythm. Dinner happens around somebody else's schedule. Weekends have commitments. Invitations arrive through the couple. Shopping happens because the household needs it.

Then the structure changes.

What appears to be "more freedom" can initially feel like dead space.

That space gets filled somehow.

For some people, the default becomes:

- more work;
- scrolling;
- takeaway;
- television;
- errands that could have taken one hour;
- waiting to see if somebody else has plans.

The goal of this module is not maximum productivity.

It is to give your week enough structure that your life stops defaulting to whatever is easiest.

**Begin with the time that repeatedly goes wrong.** It might be dinner after work, the first evening without your children, or a Saturday with nothing arranged. Keep routines that already work. This guide helps you design the missing part, not replace your entire calendar.

---

## Your weekly anchors

Use this section when important things happen only if you remember them at the last minute. An anchor is a regular place in the week for a task or activity, with a small fallback when the main plan fails.

An anchor is something that happens at roughly the same time and makes other decisions easier.

Choose anchors from eight categories:

| CATEGORY | EXAMPLE ANCHOR |
|----------|----------------|
| Work     | 08:30 start    |

| CATEGORY  | EXAMPLE ANCHOR               |
|-----------|------------------------------|
| Food      | grocery shop Wednesday       |
| Home      | cleaning Saturday morning    |
| Body      | gym Mon/Wed/Fri              |
| People    | Thursday pub / Tuesday sport |
| Kids      | pickup Friday                |
| Admin     | Sunday 20-minute review      |
| Free time | Saturday afternoon activity  |

Do not schedule every hour.

Schedule the things you otherwise repeatedly forget or postpone.

### Build one anchor now:

Choose the recurring problem, such as having no food on a late work night.

Attach the solution to a dependable event, such as shopping on the way home on Thursday.

Name the action and realistic duration. "Groceries, 25 minutes" is clearer than "sort food."

Add a fallback: if work runs late, use the short list on Friday or an affordable delivery option.

Put the appointment in your own calendar. This guide saves notes but does not send reminders.

Open your weekly anchors and record the activity, when it happens, how long it takes and the fallback. Start with one or two gaps; you do not need eight new commitments.

---

## Build your baseline week

Open the next seven days in the calendar you actually use. Write fixed obligations first: work or shifts, travel, existing appointments and children's arrangements if relevant. Include the travel and preparation those commitments need. If work varies, attach routines to "after the last shift" or another event instead of an impossible fixed weekday.

Then add:

one home anchor;

one food anchor;

two or three body anchors;

one admin anchor;

- one social anchor;
- one piece of genuinely unallocated time.

Why leave some time unallocated?

Because a completely engineered week becomes another job. The list above is an example menu, not a prescribed exercise or social schedule.

**Worked example: a week already full of work.** Tuesday after dinner: one laundry load. Thursday on the way home: shop for three dinners. Saturday at 10: coffee with a friend, or the same café alone if they cannot come. Sunday at 6: review next week's dates. Keep the gym sessions or activities you already enjoy and leave another evening open.

Check for collisions before adding more. If Tuesday's laundry competes with a regular late meeting, move the slot now. Finish with a week you could actually follow, not a week that would require unusually high energy.

## The minimum viable week

If life currently feels messy, use this as a review list. Keep the parts already covered and choose one missing item to arrange first. Exercise should suit your health and ability; social contact could be a short call, not necessarily an evening out.

| ACTION LIST              |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | One grocery shop             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | One laundry slot             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | One cleaning slot            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Two exercise sessions        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | One social commitment        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | One admin review             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | One planned weekend activity |

This is a starting template, not a guarantee about how the week will feel. If the full list is too much, begin with food, an essential household task and one chosen activity or contact. After a week, review what happened: keep the useful slots, shrink or move the ones you repeatedly missed. A missed slot is information about the plan, not a reason to abandon it.

---

# Workdays

If you keep working after the necessary work is finished, check whether the evening has a visible next step. Working longer can be a deliberate choice. The problem here is work automatically occupying time you wanted for something else.

Work expands because work still has clear rules.

Nobody has to decide:

- what counts as progress;
- when the day starts;
- what to do next.

If this describes your week, choose one ordinary workday to test a clear finish. Identify the latest realistic stopping point, what must be completed before it, and what happens immediately after. For shift work, on-call duties or unpredictable deadlines, use the end of the shift or agreed handover rather than a universal 5 p.m. rule.

## The workday closing ritual

Use this when closing the laptop does not feel like the end of the day. The aim is to leave a clear restart point for tomorrow and a clear first step for tonight.

At the end of work:

- Write tomorrow's first task.
- Close the work device.
- Change location if working from home.
- Do one physical transition: walk, gym, shower, cooking.
- Do not reopen work "for five minutes" unless there is a real reason.

The goal is not work-life balance philosophy.

It is to create a visible line between work and the rest of your life.

**Example:** write "Tomorrow: finish the cost estimate before opening email," shut the laptop, put it out of sight and start the dinner you already chose. If you use the same device for personal tasks, close work tabs and notifications according to your work requirements rather than pretending you can stop using the device entirely.

If an urgent duty interrupts the evening, handle it and deliberately close work again. On a difficult night, the minimum transition can be changing clothes and having a meal. Check the result after several workdays: did you leave work when intended, and did you know what to do next?

---

# The Empty Saturday Protocol

Use this when an unplanned weekend tends to turn into waiting, work or scrolling you did not really choose. An open weekend can also be welcome; you do not need to fill it just to meet a rule.

Try making one decision before the weekend arrives. Thursday is an example. If it is already Saturday, use the same steps for the next few hours.

Choose one activity you would like and, if useful, a second activity of a different kind. Use the categories below as options. Name a time and place, check opening or booking details, and decide what you will do if the weather or another person changes the plan.

## **SOCIAL**

- friend;
- family;
- group activity;
- event.

## **PHYSICAL**

- gym;
- hike;
- cycle;
- sport;
- long walk.

## **USEFUL**

- home task;
- admin;
- shopping;
- car;
- cooking.

## **EXPLORE**

- town;
- museum;
- market;
- restaurant;
- day trip.

## REST

film;  
reading;  
gaming;  
genuinely doing nothing.

A rest-only weekend may be exactly what you need. The distinction is whether you chose it. If you want something else, make that one activity concrete and leave the remaining time open.

### SCENARIO / WORKED EXAMPLE

**Friday night problem:** No plans, no children, everybody you know is busy.

**Bad default:** Stay at work late, order food, scroll, decide Saturday morning.

**Better system:** On Thursday, send one invitation for a Saturday 10 a.m. walk. Choose a route you would also enjoy alone. If the answer is no, the walk can still happen; if the weather is poor, choose an indoor alternative that fits your budget. The rest can stay open.

If you are low on energy, shorten the plan: a nearby café, a brief walk suited to your mobility, or a film deliberately chosen at home. Your completion test is "I know what I am doing and how to start," not "I have arranged an impressive weekend."

---

## Kid-week / non-kid-week

If you share custody, trying to make both weeks identical often creates unnecessary friction.

They can be different operating modes. Use the days or handovers in your real arrangement; you do not need alternating full weeks.

Make a separate short note for "children here" and "on my own." In each, keep three essentials visible: meals, fixed logistics and one manageable household task. You can label entries in your weekly anchors accordingly. This is a manual planning method, not an automatic calendar switch.

## Kid-week

Priorities:

school;  
meals;

- transport;
- homework;
- bedtime;
- clothes;
- appointments;
- one enjoyable shared activity;
- enough household maintenance that the place still works.

Start with the next visit. Check arrival and departure arrangements, count the meals you will cover, and note anything that must travel. Ask what needs confirming rather than assuming another adult has it covered. Keep one simple shared activity as an option, adjusted to the children's age and wishes.

**Example:** children arrive Friday evening. Thursday: check breakfast supplies and clean bedding. Friday: familiar dinner at home. Saturday: existing sports commitment, with travel time included. The laundry or longer home project can move to a different day.

Do not overload kid-week with self-improvement goals.

## Non-kid-week

Watch for a pattern you do not actually want. These headings describe possible defaults, not a judgement about needing rest or choosing to work:

### Mistake 1

Turn it into recovery time only.

### Mistake 2

Turn it into work time only.

Use non-kid-week for:

- heavier exercise;
- social life;
- home projects;
- longer admin;
- dating if relevant;
- solo experiences;
- preparation that makes kid-week easier.

On the first solo evening, keep a meal and one next action ready rather than expecting the larger-household routine to continue automatically. For example: a single portion of a familiar dinner, followed by booking the Saturday activity. Rest is a legitimate plan too.

Review both notes after one cycle. If you consistently overfill the solo days or forget your own meals, reduce the plan. If you do not have children, apply the same method to busy and quieter days when useful.

# Food rhythm

You do not need meal-prep obsession.

You need fewer 8 p.m. decisions. You may already cook well; the unfamiliar job may be buying and cooking for one, or feeding yourself on days without children.

Start by counting the dinners you will actually eat at home before your next shop. Do not shop for seven nights if you will only be home for three. Pick meals you already know, then reduce the shopping quantities or deliberately assign each extra portion a future use.

Use a three-layer food system:

## ALWAYS AVAILABLE

Keep a small set of foods you genuinely use, adjusted for dietary needs and storage space. Options include eggs, yogurt, bread, fruit, frozen vegetables, beans or another protein you enjoy, pasta/rice and coffee/tea. "Always available" means a reliable personal default, not owning everything in this list.

## THREE RELIABLE DINNERS

Choose three meals whose preparation you already know. Write the ingredients and how many portions you intend to make. If you dislike eating the same meal repeatedly, use overlapping ingredients in different dishes rather than a large identical batch.

## ONE FLEX NIGHT

Takeaway, restaurant or improvisation.

The point is not nutrition perfection.

The point is preventing "nothing in the house" from becoming a recurring problem.

**Worked example: three dinners at home, cooking for one.** These quantities are a planning example, not a nutritional prescription. Adjust to appetite, dietary needs and package instructions.

| Evening | Meal                                                 | What to plan                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Monday  | Pasta with beans, tomato sauce and frozen vegetables | Example: 90 g dry pasta, half a 400 g tin of beans (drained), 200 g sauce and 150 g frozen vegetables. Cook and heat according to the package instructions, then combine. |

| EVENING   | MEAL                                    | WHAT TO PLAN                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wednesday | Eggs on toast with beans and vegetables | Example: two eggs prepared your usual way, two slices of toast, the remaining beans and 150 g vegetables. Refrigerate the opened beans promptly and use them only within the label's storage limit. If that is shorter, use them sooner or freeze if suitable. |
| Friday    | A portion of soup you enjoy, with bread | Example: a 400 g pack of soup and two slices of bread. Adjust the serving to your appetite; a bought soup is a valid low-effort dinner.                                                                                                                        |

**Small shopping list for that example:** dry pasta (only 90 g used, so keep the remainder in the pantry as directed), one 400 g tin of beans, 200 g sauce or a larger pack with the extra portion frozen promptly if suitable, one 500 g bag of frozen vegetables (leave unused vegetables frozen), eggs, bread for two meals and one soup. Check the cupboard first. Buy the smallest useful egg pack and assign extra eggs to breakfast or another meal within their storage instructions; freeze suitable spare bread. A lower price per unit is not useful if the rest is wasted.

**Little freezer space, or no wish to repeat dinner?** Shop for two nearby evenings instead. Choose ingredients shared across different meals, such as beans in pasta one night and on toast the next. Buy loose vegetables or small packs you can use in that window, and keep an unopened shelf-stable soup as the fallback. You do not need a large batch or a freezer full of identical boxes.

**No-energy fallback:** keep one meal that needs almost no preparation, such as a suitable ready meal or ready-to-eat combination you like. Follow its label. You do not have to cook from scratch for the plan to count.

For cooked leftovers, refrigerate promptly in shallow containers within two hours, or one hour above 90°F / 32°C. Use refrigerated leftovers within three to four days or freeze them; reheat leftovers to an internal 165°F / 74°C, checked with a food thermometer. Follow product-specific instructions as well. USDA leftovers and food safety.

After the next shop, notice what remained unused and what ran out. Change the next list by those facts. You are finished for now when your next dinners, their ingredients and one fallback are accounted for.

## Home rhythm

Pick the household task that most often becomes an unpleasant catch-up job. Break it into a version that fits a normal day: one load of laundry, clear and clean the kitchen worktop, or clean the bathroom. Put the needed supplies where you can find them and attach the task to a recurring slot.

Example:

| DAY      | TASK      |
|----------|-----------|
| Tuesday  | laundry   |
| Thursday | groceries |

| DAY      | TASK            |
|----------|-----------------|
| Saturday | 45-minute clean |
| Sunday   | admin / reset   |

Use the table as an example, not a required timetable. If the clean repeatedly exceeds the slot, divide it by room or task. If Tuesday laundry fails because you get home late, move the slot rather than adding reminders to an impossible evening.

A useful fallback is smaller and explicit: "If Saturday is full, clean the bathroom and take out rubbish; move the floors to Monday." Keep necessary hygiene tasks covered and postpone optional polishing.

---

## Social rhythm

Do not rely entirely on spontaneous invitations.

Aim for:

- one recurring group/activity;
- one flexible friend/family interaction.

A recurring activity gives you another chance to see people without arranging everything from scratch. Choose one you can afford and realistically attend, then check when and how newcomers join. Send a specific invitation for the flexible contact instead of leaving it as "catch up sometime."

**Example:** Wednesday community class, plus a call with your brother on Sunday. If the class is not a good fit after a fair try, choose another environment; attendance is not a guarantee of friendship. Use Your People for the first-visit and follow-up steps.

---

## Admin rhythm

Use twenty minutes as a starting review slot, not a promise that all your admin will fit. The aim is to find what is due and decide the next actions. A tax return or complicated insurance issue needs its own time and, where appropriate, professional help.

Use Sunday or another quiet slot.

Check:

- calendar;
- bills;

school messages;  
appointments;  
renewals;  
car/home reminders;  
anything waiting for a decision.

Do not “do all admin”.

Decide what needs action this week. Open the calendar and recent messages rather than relying on memory. For each item, either do a genuinely small action, schedule time for the work, or record who you are waiting for and when to follow up.

**Example:** a renewal is due next month. This week's action is to check the terms and choose a review date, not just write “insurance” on a list. Use the Life Admin register for the owner, due date and next action. Add reminders to your own calendar separately.

---

## Free time inventory

Start with a few things you enjoy or might enjoy; ten is an optional brainstorming target. Include something that needs little money or planning, so the list is useful when a bigger outing will not work.

Not “passions”.

Normal things.

Examples:

cinema;  
driving somewhere;  
golf;  
football;  
cooking;  
hiking;  
concerts;  
photography;  
reading;  
DIY;  
fishing;  
cycling;  
live sport;

markets;  
classes.

Now mark:

SOLO  
SOCIAL  
BOTH

A good free-time list contains all three.

If everything is SOCIAL, you are dependent on availability.

If you want more contact and everything is SOLO, add one activity where interaction is possible. You do not need an equal split between the categories.

Beside your top two choices, note a real place or provider, the likely cost, when it is available and the first step. "Cinema: local venue, Saturday afternoon, check listings Friday" is ready to use. "Travel more" is still an idea. Check opening hours, accessibility or booking requirements before leaving.

---

## The "one useful, one enjoyable" rule

When a completely open day feels directionless:

Do:

one useful thing;  
one enjoyable thing.

Example:

Useful: buy shelves and organise documents.  
Enjoyable: drive somewhere for lunch.

That is enough.

You do not need to optimise the day.

Choose actions small enough for the day you actually have. "File the three letters on the table" may be more realistic than "organise all documents." Decide which comes first and what counts as finished. If you need a rest day, take one; this rule is for an open day you want to give direction.

Build your weekly anchors: put the activity, day and next action in one place.

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# FAQ

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## QUICK ANSWERS

**01**    **Should I schedule every evening?**

No. Structure is useful when it removes repeated decisions. Empty space is useful when it feels chosen.

**02**    **What if I genuinely enjoy working a lot?**

Keep working. Just make sure work is a choice rather than the only part of life that still has structure.

**03**    **What if all my friends are busy at weekends?**

Keep those friendships and try a different time, such as a short weekday coffee. If you want another source of contact, try a recurring activity where other adults already show up. A cancellation does not have to cancel your whole day.

**04**    **How many social plans should I have?**

Enough that your week contains contact without becoming exhausting. Try one or two anchors and adjust to the contact you want and the energy you have.

**05**    **What if I hate routines?**

Use anchors, not a minute-by-minute schedule.

---

---

## You're done when...

Review a real week rather than just the calendar you intended to follow. Keep what helped, move what clashed and make any missed action smaller. You can complete this guide with a modest rhythm; full evenings and constant productivity are not the goal.

### YOU'RE DONE WHEN

- |                          |                                                                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Your week has visible anchors.                                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Work has a real end point.                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | You know how to handle an empty Saturday.                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Food, laundry and cleaning have recurring slots.                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Kid-week and non-kid-week have different expectations if relevant.        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | You have at least one social anchor.                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Your calendar supports your life instead of merely recording obligations. |

FIELD NOTE 03

# The Stuff That Used to Happen Automatically

Make recurring life admin visible, owned and boring.

03

/

06

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## OUTCOME

Recurring responsibilities have named owners, verified dates and clear next actions.

---

# The invisible system

In a long relationship, responsibilities divide.

Sometimes explicitly.

"I'll handle the insurance. You handle school."

Often implicitly.

One person notices what is low. One remembers birthdays. One knows when the boiler was last serviced. One books the dentist. One keeps an eye on the joint calendar. One knows which child needs what on Wednesday.

The arrangement can be completely reasonable.

The problem is what happens when ownership changes but the system does not.

You are not trying to learn "adulting".

You are trying to identify every recurring responsibility that now belongs to you and give it a reliable home.

**Start with a responsibility that has already surprised you:** an approaching renewal, a missed booking or a bill you assumed was handled. Find the actual document or message, identify the next required action and put its date somewhere you use. One complete record is more useful than a long list of vague worries.

This guide organises practical information. It does not decide legal responsibility, change an agreement or recommend financial or medical choices. Where ownership or obligations are disputed, record the question and seek the appropriate qualified advice.

---

## The four destinations

Use these four destinations to decide how a responsibility will happen next time. The destination is only useful when it names a person, a real system or an actual calendar entry.

The Catch-Up Map also offers LEARN. Use that as a temporary step: find the missing instruction or ask the right person, then assign the recurring job to DO, AUTOMATE, CALENDAR or OUTSOURCE.

### DO

You personally handle it when it happens. Name the trigger and first action: "When a bill arrives, check the amount against the account before paying." For a job that takes time, reserve a slot as well.

## AUTOMATE

A system performs the routine action, such as an authorised recurring payment. You still check that it is set up correctly, has the necessary funds or information, and completes. A note saying “automate” is not automation.

## CALENDAR

It happens on a date or at an interval and needs a reminder. Put both the deadline and the earlier action date in the calendar you use. Include the link or location of the information needed to act.

## OUTSOURCE

Somebody else handles it, with an agreed scope, cost and due date. Record the person or service, what they confirmed and when you will check completion. Sending a request is not the same as a confirmed booking.

If a recurring task is in none of these categories, it is living in your head.

That is where things can get missed.

**Example:** an appliance service is due according to its instructions. CALENDAR is the booking reminder; OUTSOURCE is the agreed service appointment. Use more than one destination when needed. You are done when you can explain what will trigger the task, who will do it and how you will know it happened.

---

# The Life Admin Audit

Work through each category.

Do not complete everything today.

Open your Life Admin register. Start with four responsibilities. Record where information is kept, never passwords or full account numbers.

Begin with documents you can actually check: recent statements, bills, your current calendar and the household folder. Work through the categories below as prompts, skipping those that do not apply.

For each of the first four records, use the available fields: **task**, **owner/contact**, **due date or reminder**, and **next action**. Put a document location in the next-action note if useful. Add a real reminder to your own calendar separately; this register does not send notifications.

**Filled example:** “Internet renewal | me; provider account | check by 12 October | open contract in Home folder, confirm renewal terms and decide whether to keep it.” The date is illustrative; use the date on your own contract.

# Money and bills

Use this when you are unsure what is due, which account pays it, or whether the old arrangement still works. Open the actual latest bill or provider account. First confirm that it is a responsibility you are authorised to manage; do not cancel, redirect or change shared payments on an assumption.

List:

- rent/mortgage;
- utilities;
- internet;
- phone;
- insurance;
- subscriptions;
- memberships;
- child-related recurring payments;
- regular transfers;
- annual fees.

For each, record:

- amount;
- due date;
- automatic/manual;
- account/card used;
- renewal date;
- cancellation method.

**DO / AUTOMATE / CALENDAR / OUTSOURCE**

| DO                    | AUTOMATE                        | CALENDAR                            | OUTSOURCE                                  |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| review unusual bills. | predictable recurring payments. | annual insurance/contract renewals. | accountant/bookkeeper if genuinely useful. |

**Work one bill through to a usable record.** Confirm its due date and payment status, note an account nickname rather than a full number, then choose the next action. "Ask provider why this amount changed" is more useful than "utilities." If you cannot establish a due date or owner, record who you need to ask and a follow-up date.

Check that an automatic payment actually completed and that the account can cover upcoming debits. A manual payment still needs a reminder early enough for its processing time. CFPB explanation of automatic payments.

Finish when your next due bills have a verified date, a known payment method and a clear action. Do not put passwords, full card numbers or sensitive financial documents in the workbook.

## Home

Start with your lease, building information and the instructions for equipment you own. Check which tasks are yours and which belong to the landlord or building service. The list below is a prompt to identify responsibilities, not a maintenance schedule or a recommendation to buy every service.

Recurring:

- cleaning;
- laundry;
- filters;
- smoke alarm batteries/tests;
- heating/cooling servicing;
- garden;
- pest control where relevant;
- waste/recycling;
- appliance maintenance;
- landlord/building issues.

For each relevant item, locate its actual instructions and required interval. Safety checks and urgent defects do not wait for a monthly or quarterly review. If the interval or responsibility is unclear, ask the landlord, manufacturer or a qualified professional.

**Example:** "Heating service | landlord contact | ask this week | confirm who arranges it and where the record is kept." Keep the confirmation with your home documents. Your job in this audit is to close the information gap, not teach yourself an unfamiliar repair.

## Car

If you own or manage a vehicle, collect the current registration, insurance, service record and owner's manual. Copy verified dates from them rather than trying to remember what someone else used to arrange. If you do not own a car, skip this section.

Create one Car Card:

- make/model;
- registration;
- insurance renewal;
- inspection/MOT/registration date;
- service interval;

- tyre baseline;
- roadside assistance;
- mechanic;
- spare key location.

Record the source beside uncertain items: "service interval: check manual," or "inspection date: confirm with official local service." Requirements vary by vehicle and location, so "annual" is not a universal rule.

For tyre pressure, use the vehicle's placard or owner's manual, not the maximum shown on the tyre sidewall. Ask a qualified service provider if you are unsure. NHTSA tyre guidance.

**Next action example:** find the service record, confirm what is next with your garage and calendar a booking reminder. Keep the card's location easy to find. You are finished when the next required action has an owner and a real date, and you know whom to contact for a problem.

## Health

Organise appointments and existing instructions; do not create your own clinical schedule from this checklist. If a follow-up date, prescription process or recommended check is unclear, ask the clinician or pharmacist responsible.

Track:

- GP/primary care;
- dentist;
- optician;
- prescriptions;
- regular checks;
- specialist appointments;
- vaccination/check requirements relevant to you.

Keep:

- provider names;
- contact details;
- insurance details where applicable;
- next due date.

Do not turn this into medical optimisation.

This is administration. Start with one current provider: check the contact, whether anything is already booked and what the next agreed step is. Add the appointment or booking reminder to your calendar, including any instructions from the provider. Record only a brief reference in this workbook; keep medical details in an appropriate private location.

# Documents

Use this when finding a document means searching several old folders or inboxes. Choose one main place you can access and maintain: a labelled physical folder, a secure digital folder, or both for different needs. Do not move the only copy until you know where it belongs.

Create one physical/digital location for:

- ID/passport;
- insurance;
- home documents;
- car;
- tax;
- employment;
- custody/child documents if relevant;
- medical;
- warranties;
- key contracts.

The system should answer:

## If I needed this in ten minutes, where would I look first?

If email search already gives you a dependable answer, keep it and make the search easier with a folder or label. You do not need a complicated new app.

**Set up one category first:** create "Home," save or file the current rental or ownership document you are entitled to hold, and use a recognisable name such as "Home - current agreement - 2026." Keep superseded versions clearly labelled instead of guessing which is current.

For digital files, use a trusted account or device with appropriate access protection and a backup you understand. Keep originals where required and obtain professional advice before destroying legal, tax or other important records. The workbook is a location index, not a document vault.

**Completion test:** close the folder, then retrieve the document using the name or location you recorded. If that works, repeat for the next category when you need it.

---

# The recurring-task matrix

Use these four groups to review whether you have missed a recurring task. **They are organisational examples, not prescribed service, health or legal intervals.** Put each task on the date required by its actual contract, instructions, provider or local rules. Some checks happen more often; some do not apply.

## WEEKLY

groceries;  
laundry;  
cleaning;  
calendar review.

## MONTHLY

subscriptions check;  
bills review;  
home supplies;  
basic budget glance.

## QUARTERLY

documents;  
home maintenance;  
wardrobe rotation;  
car checks;  
subscriptions no longer used.

## ANNUALLY

insurance;  
major service;  
health/dental;  
memberships;  
travel documents;  
tax documents;  
emergency contacts review.

Not everything fits these periods.

The point is to stop treating recurring life as a sequence of surprises.

Convert one item in each relevant group into an actual calendar entry. For a date-specific deadline, add the earlier action required to meet it. For example: "Review renewal terms" comes before "contract renews." A recurring reminder called "admin" is less useful than "check the next month's renewals in the register."

Start with the next seven days and the next approaching renewal. When you review the matrix again, update completed dates and remove irrelevant prompts. It is a review aid, not another list you must finish in one sitting.

---

## The "Who owns this now?" test

Use this when an old shared arrangement may still be operating on assumptions. Start with one task where a missed handover would matter. Establish the existing agreement and speak to the relevant person or provider when safe and appropriate; writing your preferred owner in a notebook does not create their agreement.

For every task, ask:

Did I own this before?

Was it shared?

Did my partner mostly handle it?

Is there now nobody clearly responsible?

Number 4 is where problems hide.

### SCENARIO / WORKED EXAMPLE

**Old setup:** Your partner booked dentist appointments for the family because they kept the calendar.

**New setup:** You technically know you need a dentist. Nothing is booked.

**System:** Confirm the next step with the dental practice and calendar the booking or appointment date it recommends. If you arrange appointments for a child, confirm responsibility under the existing arrangement rather than assuming.

For uncertain ownership, record "unconfirmed" plus a next action: "Check with the school which parent receives this notice." Keep a dated confirmation where useful. You have resolved the gap when the responsibility, next step and follow-up are clear, not merely when you have assigned yourself every old household job.

---

# Birthdays and social obligations

You do not need to become a human calendar.

Choose the dates you actually want or need to act on. Add them to your calendar, then work backwards from the action: posting a card, buying a present, confirming attendance or arranging travel.

Create:

- birthdays;
- close family anniversaries;
- children's events;
- key friend dates if relevant.

Set reminders early enough to act.

Example:

- Birthday reminder: 14 days before.
- Event reminder: 7 days before.
- Day-of reminder: optional.

Why 14 days?

Fourteen days is an example lead time, not a rule. A phone call may need only a day-of reminder; shipping or travel may need more. Put the action in the reminder title, such as "Order Dad's birthday card," so you know what to do when it appears. Check one upcoming date now and choose its next action.

---

# Subscriptions

Use this when small recurring charges are hard to recognise or services no longer fit your life. Check recent statements and provider accounts, including annual charges that may not appear in one month. Before cancelling, check who uses the service, the terms and any notice requirement. Infrequent use is not a reason to cancel insurance, essential services or agreed shared obligations.

Once per quarter, or at a review interval that works for you:

| ACTION LIST              |                                                                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Review bank/card recurring charges.                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Review unused services and confirm which are appropriate to cancel. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Check price increases.                                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Check annual renewals.                                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Remove duplicate services.                                          |

For each unwanted service, use the provider's cancellation process and save the confirmation. Add a date to check that the expected cancellation or change took effect. If you still need a service, record "keep" so the review ends in a decision.

Stopping an automatic payment does not itself cancel the underlying contract or money owed. CFPB guidance on stopping automatic payments.

**Example:** an unused entertainment service renews next month. Check its terms, cancel through the account if appropriate, save the confirmation in your subscriptions folder and review the next expected charge. Deleting the app alone is not your completion test.

---

## Groceries and household supplies

Start with the item you most recently ran out of. Look at the shelf or cupboard and add the essentials you repeatedly use. A default list is a reusable memory aid, not a reason to buy every item every shop.

Not every item.

Only the things you repeatedly discover are missing.

Categories:

- breakfast;
- basic meals;
- snacks;
- coffee/tea;
- toiletries;
- cleaning;
- laundry;
- paper goods.

Use the same list as a baseline, then add specifics.

Before shopping, check the list against what is actually left and how many people will be home. When you open the last spare of an essential, add a replacement to the next shop. Avoid storing excessive supplies just because they are on the template.

**Example:** toilet paper goes on the list when the reserve is opened; coffee stays off if there is plenty; the meal list gets smaller for a solo week. Use Food rhythm to plan the dinners behind the grocery quantities. The list is working when it prevents a repeat shortage without creating unused stock.

---

## Automate without losing control

Start with one predictable responsibility that you are authorised to manage. Check what the system will do, when it will do it, what it costs and how you can change or stop it. Do not automate a task whose ownership or terms are unresolved.

Automation is useful when:

- the amount is predictable;
- failure causes avoidable hassle;
- you still receive notifications.

Avoid blind automation for:

- variable large bills;
- services you may cancel;
- anything you rarely review.

Automation should reduce memory load, not remove awareness.

**Set-up sequence:** confirm the details in the provider's official service, save the confirmation, enable relevant notifications and calendar a check after the first expected action. For payments, make sure the funding account can cover the scheduled debit. If dates or amounts vary in a way you cannot reliably cover, a manual process with reminders may fit better.

A failed first payment is a task to resolve with the provider or bank, not something to assume will fix itself. Finish when the arrangement is confirmed and its first action has been checked.

---

## Outsource intelligently

Name the result you need before asking for help. "Clean the kitchen and bathroom before Friday" or "alter the sleeves on these two shirts" is easier to quote and verify than "help me sort things out."

Outsource when:

- the task is infrequent;
- the skill gap is real;
- mistakes are expensive;
- you strongly dislike it;
- paying is cheaper than repeated avoidance.

Examples:

- deep cleaning;
- tax;
- certain repairs;
- garden;
- complex IT setup;
- alterations.

Do not outsource because the task makes you feel inexperienced.

Outsource because the cost, skill and time trade-off makes sense to you.

Before agreeing, confirm the scope, total price or quote basis, date, access arrangements and how you will know the work is finished. Use appropriately qualified professionals for regulated or safety-critical work. Avoid sharing more personal information or access than the job needs.

If the quote does not fit your budget, reduce the optional scope, postpone it or learn a low-risk part yourself. A paid service is an option, not a requirement to complete this module. Record the confirmed appointment and check the agreed result afterwards.

---

## The Sunday 20

Use this as a short review appointment, on Sunday or a day that suits your schedule. Open your calendar, current messages and Life Admin register. Twenty minutes is an example timebox; longer jobs need separate time.

Work through:

- Next seven days.
- Bills/renewals.
- Appointments.
- Kids/school if relevant.
- One home/admin task.

Anything waiting for a decision.

For each item, choose one outcome: do a small action, put time in the calendar, ask the relevant person, or deliberately defer it with a review date. Update items marked "waiting" rather than collecting more of them.

**Example:** a letter needs a response next week. Read enough to identify what is requested, note the deadline and book a slot to gather the documents. If you need specialist advice, contacting that person is the next action. Do not pretend the task is handled just because "letter" is on the list.

Stop when the review slot ends unless something genuinely needs immediate attention. Leave the register showing the next actions and where they will happen.

The point is to keep the system alive without letting admin become a hobby.

---

## Emergency basics

Prepare a short contact sheet you can retrieve when a problem occurs. Confirm the numbers from official documents or provider sites, give each a clear label, and keep a sensible offline copy if you may lose internet access. Keep sensitive details private.

Keep one page with:

- emergency contacts;
- landlord/building;
- doctor;
- children/school;
- insurance;
- roadside;
- important account support;
- trusted family contact.

This is not disaster preparation.

It is avoiding unnecessary searching when something already went wrong. Add your local emergency service number from an official local source and distinguish emergency contacts from routine support. The sheet is not a substitute for contacting emergency services when there is immediate danger.

If your former partner used to be the only person who knew where important information lived, decide who should now know how to locate your contact sheet and document index. An index can name the bank or insurer, its official contact and the location of records without exposing account numbers or passwords. Discuss appropriate access arrangements separately; sharing a password is not an emergency or estate plan. Use qualified advice for legal authority or estate arrangements.

Test the arrangement by locating a routine support number without searching old emails. Review it when you move, change providers or a contact changes. You do not need to collect every possible number before the page is useful.

---

## FAQ

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### QUICK ANSWERS

**01      Should I use an app for all this?**

Only if you already like using one. Start with a calendar plus one simple document; add another tool only if it solves a problem you actually encounter.

---

**02      What belongs in the calendar versus a checklist?**

Calendar: date-specific or recurring time-based items. Checklist: processes you repeat or review.

---

**03      How much should I automate?**

Enough that predictable tasks stop using memory, but not so much that you stop noticing what you pay for.

---

**04      What if my former partner still handles some things?**

Confirm and document the arrangement where appropriate. Do not assume that the old division continues or that writing down a new owner creates agreement.

---

**05      Should I create separate systems for kids?**

Yes if their logistics are substantial. Keep the core household system clean.

---

# You're done when...

Review the responsibilities that actually apply to you. "Every" means the items identified in your current household, not every possible life event. Start with the next due items, verify rather than guess dates, and keep unresolved questions paired with a person to ask and a follow-up action. The system can grow as new responsibilities appear.

## YOU'RE DONE WHEN

- ☐ Every recurring responsibility has an owner.
- ☐ Every recurring task is DO, AUTOMATE, CALENDAR or OUTSOURCE.
- ☐ Bills and renewals are visible.
- ☐ Key documents have a known location.
- ☐ Car/home/health dates are captured.
- ☐ You have a weekly 20-minute admin review.
- ☐ Nothing important relies on "I think I'll remember."

FIELD NOTE 04

# Your People

Build a social life that belongs to you, not to the old couple.

04

/

06

---

OUTCOME

You know whom to contact, how to invite them and which recurring social setting to try.

---

# Your social life may have been a shared asset

After a long marriage, "your friends" may mean old friends, couple friends, colleagues, neighbours, relatives or parents you met through your children. You may still value those people. What changed is how contact happens: somebody else arranged dinner, invitations came addressed to both of you, or a regular family routine brought you together.

**This guide helps you make contact and plans without waiting for that old arrangement to restart.** It does not require a large network, dating or a busy calendar. If you already have reliable friends, go straight to the gap: reconnecting, invitations or finding a recurring activity.

Start with one practical question: **Who would I genuinely like to see in the next two weeks?** Write a name, not "more people". If no name comes to mind, start with "Stop trying to 'make friends'" and choose one place to try.

You can control an invitation and your own attendance. You cannot guarantee someone else's availability or turn a new acquaintance into a close friend on a schedule.

---

## The Friend Audit

The audit is a short list of possible next contacts. It is not a ranking of people's worth. Use paper or the notes beside this section; start with the names that come to mind rather than searching your entire contact history.

List people in five groups.

### KEEP CLOSE

People you already speak to and genuinely value. Write the next ordinary contact: a call, lunch or a walk. Existing good friendships deserve time too.

### RECONNECT

People you liked but lost touch with. Choose someone you would enjoy seeing now, not someone you feel obliged to impress.

### COUPLE FRIENDS

People mostly connected through the old relationship. Ask whether you want a friendship with that person individually. You do not need an answer for every couple immediately.

## ACTIVITY FRIENDS

People linked to sport, hobbies, work or recurring places. A familiar face can be a useful starting point even if you have never met outside that setting.

## LET DRIFT

Relationships that existed mainly because circumstances put you together. Leave them without an action for now. This does not require an announcement or permanently cutting anyone off.

**Turn the list into two actions:** pick one person to contact this week and one existing relationship to maintain. Put a day beside each. The rest can wait.

### EXAMPLE

**Illustrative audit:** Ben, old cycling friend: ask whether he still rides on Sundays. David, current close friend: arrange the next lunch before leaving this week's lunch. A former couple friendship you are unsure about: leave undecided for now.

The useful output is two specific contacts, not a perfectly classified address book.

---

## Reconnecting without making it weird

You may have gone quiet during the separation, or simply lost the habit of initiating. A short message gives the other person an easy way back into contact. You do not need to explain your whole absence before asking to meet.

Choose one person you actually want to see.

Mention the shared connection or acknowledge the gap briefly.

Suggest a manageable plan, with a day or two possible times.

### COPY-READY SCRIPT

**Old friend** "Mate, realised it's been far too long. Fancy grabbing a beer/coffee next week?"

**Friend you mostly saw as couples** "Would be good to catch up properly sometime. Free one evening next week?"

**Someone from an old activity** "I've been thinking about getting back into [activity]. Are you still doing it?"

Adjust the words to sound like you. If they reply warmly but vaguely, offer a time: "Thursday after work or Sunday morning?" If they are unavailable, ask whether another week suits. If there is no reply, one brief follow-up later is enough for this attempt; put your effort elsewhere after that.

A serious unresolved disagreement needs more than a casual invitation. In that case, acknowledge what happened or choose a different person for this first step.

**Done for today:** you sent one message. A reply is welcome, but it is not the condition for counting your action as completed.

---

## Stop trying to “make friends”

If “make friends” leaves you staring at an empty calendar, make the task smaller. **Choose one setting you could return to, where conversation can start around something you are already doing.** Familiarity gives you another chance to talk; attending once does not create an obligation for anyone to become your friend.

Choose by fit, not by which activity sounds most impressive:

**You would enjoy the activity anyway:** sport, a class, volunteering, a hobby group or a community gathering.

**People can actually talk:** there is a break, shared task, small group or time before and after. A silent solo workout may not give you that opportunity.

**You can realistically return:** the cost, travel, accessibility and time work with your week.

**Newcomers are welcome:** the organiser can explain how to join and what experience or equipment you need.

Try this sequence:

Find two local options using the venue's website, local listings or a recommendation. Check that the group still meets.

Ask the organiser: “I'm interested in coming along. Is the next session suitable for someone new, and do I need to book or bring anything?”

Book one visit. Arrive with enough time to introduce yourself to the organiser.

Start with the shared activity: “Have you done this route before?” or “How long have you been coming here?” Listen to the answer; one short exchange is enough.

Afterwards, decide whether you would return. If yes, put the next available session in your calendar. On a later visit, greet a familiar person and continue the conversation.

#### EXAMPLE

**Illustrative first attempt:** You enjoy walking but have nobody free on Saturdays. You find a local group with a suitable route and ask whether newcomers can join. At the start you say, "First time with this group. Do you usually meet here?" After the walk, you check the next date. You have created a repeatable opportunity without having to ask a stranger to become a friend.

**If you already attend but only know people inside the activity:** try one small invitation after a conversation that felt mutual: "I'm getting a coffee after this. Would you like to join?" If nobody has compatible time, keep the activity if you enjoy it and try another setting for the social gap. More visits to the same room may not solve a mismatch in availability or the kind of connection you want.

**If the first group is a poor fit:** change the setting, time or activity. If you enjoyed it but conversations were brief, another visit may be worthwhile. There is no required number of attempts, and you do not have to stay somewhere unwelcoming.

**Your first completion point:** one suitable visit arranged. Building familiarity is the continuing part, not a pass-or-fail test of that visit.

---

## The two-anchor baseline

An anchor is a plan that has a regular place in your calendar: a Wednesday game, fortnightly coffee, a class or a family lunch. It removes one repeated decision about when you will see people.

**Start with one if two would be unrealistic.** Choose a frequency you and the other people can maintain. Weekly is an option, not a requirement. If your parenting or work schedule alternates, use a fortnightly plan or different arrangements for different weeks.

Set each anchor using four details:

**What and who:** Thursday class; Sunday walk with Ben.

**When:** the actual next date and time, then a recurring entry if agreed.

**How it is confirmed:** class booking, group message or a direct arrangement.

**If it falls through:** a specific solo alternative and a message to arrange the next meeting.

#### EXAMPLE

**Illustrative setup:** Wednesday five-a-side is the group anchor. Saturday coffee with one friend is the quieter anchor. If the match is cancelled, you take your usual walk and confirm next week's game. The walk keeps the evening usable; it does not replace the social contact indefinitely.

Use the Weekly Anchors register in Practical Tools if you want to keep the plan together. **Add the actual appointments to your own calendar too; this product does not send reminders.** Review whether the arrangement suits you after you have tried it, rather than collecting commitments at once.

---

## Couple friends

A shared friendship may continue, change shape or fade. You can make an individual invitation without asking the person to take a position on the separation.

Three useful boundaries:

- Invite them because you want to see them, not to gather news about your ex.

- Keep your invitation separate from any invitation or relationship they have with your former partner.

- Say what makes contact comfortable for you, such as avoiding updates about the separation.

For example: "I'd like to keep in touch. Fancy lunch next week? I'd rather leave updates about the separation out of it." If a shared event might include your ex, ask the organiser privately before deciding whether to attend.

You are allowed to decline situations that do not work for you. If someone repeatedly ignores a clear boundary, reduce contact. If they simply cannot make one dinner, that alone does not tell you where the friendship stands.

---

## When everybody else is still married

An old friend may want to see you but have limited evenings, children at home or plans made well in advance. Separate **unavailable at that time** from **uninterested in contact** by offering a workable alternative.

Try a short lunch near work, an early walk or a date two weeks ahead. "Could you do coffee for half an hour before work next Friday?" is easier to answer than "When are you free?" If they suggest alternatives too, build on that. If all effort stays one-sided over time, stop relying on that relationship for your next plan.

Keep old friends where the connection is good, and add an activity or contact with similar availability. You do not need to replace married friends with single friends. You need some plans that fit the calendar you have now.

---

## Going somewhere alone

If you want to go but are waiting for somebody to join you, choose a first outing with a clear activity and an easy exit: a film, exhibition, lunch, market, class or sports event.

Pick something you would actually enjoy, not a test of bravery.

Check opening times, tickets, travel and accessibility before leaving.

Decide your simple plan: "Lunch at noon, then walk home."

Go. You can speak to people if an opportunity arises, but conversation is not required for the outing to count.

For a solo lunch, a straightforward start is: "Table for one, please." Choose a time and venue you find comfortable. Take a book if you want one. If the first venue feels wrong, leave and choose another; there is no exercise you must endure.

**The result:** you did something you wanted to do without another person's availability deciding for you. Going alone and building friendships can both belong in your week.

---

## Invitations

A useful invitation gives someone a plan they can accept, decline or adjust. Include **the activity, a time and enough location detail** to make the choice easy.

Vague: "We should definitely do something soon."

Specific: "Fancy coffee at the station café Saturday at 10? Thursday after work could also work."

Once they accept, confirm the arrangement and put it in your calendar. If they decline, "No problem. Another week?" leaves room without pressure. If they remain vague, do not hold the whole weekend open: make another plan.

When you need to book, say so: "I'll reserve tomorrow afternoon. Let me know by then if you'd like to join." This is a practical deadline, not a tactic to make someone respond.

---

# Hosting

Hosting creates a reason to meet in a place you control. Start smaller than a dinner party: coffee, takeaway, a match or a simple meal you already know how to make.

For a first attempt:

Invite one or two people with a clear start time and format: "Takeaway and the match Friday from seven?"

Check any food requirements before ordering or cooking.

Prepare seating, drinks, a usable bathroom with soap and a clean hand towel, and somewhere for coats.

Sort food before guests arrive where possible, so you can spend time with them.

You do not need to finish decorating first. If the home is not ready or you would rather meet elsewhere, suggest a café. The purpose is contact, not passing a home inspection. Use Your Place's hosting baseline for the room checks.

---

## Your social map

The Friend Audit chooses where to put effort. This map shows whether your current plans rely on one person or one setting. Use three circles on paper, or three short lists.

### INNER

People you trust. Write who you would actually call, rather than who you think ought to be here.

### REGULAR

People you see repeatedly. Include activity contacts even if they are not close friends.

### EXPANDING

People you would like to know better. Choose one natural next interaction, such as coffee after a shared activity.

A person can move between circles, but you do not need to force that movement. Look for one practical gap: perhaps you have close friends far away but no local regular contact, or many colleagues but nobody you see outside work. Choose the action for that gap, rather than aiming for a particular number of friends.

---

# The monthly rule

Use a short monthly check to stop good intentions disappearing into the calendar. These are prompts, not three compulsory new commitments:

**Invite somebody:** is there a person you want to see but no next plan?

**Reconnect with somebody:** is there an old connection worth one message?

**Try a recurring environment:** do you need another opportunity, or should you keep attending the one already working?

Open your calendar and choose one action that is still missing. If your social rhythm already works, maintain it. More activity is not automatically better than a few relationships you enjoy.

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## FAQ

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### QUICK ANSWERS

**01 What if my old friends disappeared after the divorce?**

Try one direct invitation to a person you genuinely miss. Some people may be unsure whether contact is welcome. If the effort stays one-sided, put your next effort into a different person or recurring setting. You do not have to revive every relationship.

**02 What if I am naturally introverted?**

Choose a format that suits you: one-to-one coffee, a small class or a shared task. You do not need to perform in a large group or build a large network.

**03 Should I make friends through work?**

If you enjoy each other's company, a simple invitation outside work can be reasonable. Respect a decline and keep workplace boundaries. Having another source of contact also means changes at work do not remove every social plan.

**04 What if I do not drink?**

Say what you would prefer and offer a plan: coffee, a walk, lunch, a class or an activity. A social invitation does not need alcohol to make sense.

**05 What if I am embarrassed that I have nobody to call?**

Begin with a low-pressure action, such as asking an organiser about a session. You do not have to explain your whole situation. If isolation or distress is making ordinary life difficult, support from a trusted person or qualified professional can sit alongside these practical steps.

---

# You're done when...

## YOU'RE DONE WHEN

- ☐ You have completed the Friend Audit.
- ☐ You have reconnected with at least one person.
- ☐ You have one or two recurring social anchors.
- ☐ You know which couple friendships you genuinely want to keep.
- ☐ You can make a weekend plan without waiting for an invitation.
- ☐ You have at least one environment where you repeatedly see the same people.

FIELD NOTE 05

# Your Look

Update the baseline. Do not audition for your twenties.

05

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06

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OUTCOME

You can put together comfortable, suitable outfits for the situations in your life.

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# The objective is not fashion

You need clothes that fit, work together and suit the places you actually go. You may already have most of them. This guide helps you find a usable outfit, identify a specific gap and avoid replacing a wardrobe just because life changed.

## Extreme 1

Nothing gets checked. You keep reaching for clothes that no longer fit your body or your plans, because they are familiar.

## Extreme 2

Everything changes at once. You buy for an imagined new life before knowing what you will actually wear.

A more useful starting point is **one real occasion coming up**: lunch, an evening out, work or an invitation. Put together an outfit for that occasion before buying anything.

## Current. Not younger.

Here, “current” means suitable for your life now. Age does not ban a colour, fit or style you enjoy. Comfort, condition, the occasion and your own preferences matter more than imitating the men in a reference image.

---

# The wardrobe audit

Work through one category at a time so the task remains manageable. Start with the clothes you need for your next occasion. Try them on; remembering how something fitted last year is not a fit check.

Mark each item:

## KEEP

Fits comfortably, is in good condition and works in at least one of your real situations. Put it back in the working wardrobe.

## ALTER

Good item, wrong fit. Write the specific issue, such as “trousers need shortening”, and ask a tailor whether the change is practical and what it costs. Do not assume every fit problem can be altered economically.

## REPLACE

Useful category, but worn out or difficult to combine with what you actually wear. Name the missing function before shopping: "comfortable shoes for dinner", not "better style".

## STOP WEARING

Uncomfortable, damaged beyond a sensible repair, or no longer useful. Keep it out of the everyday rotation. Sentimental clothes can be stored separately without deciding their final fate today.

**Finish one category before opening another.** If an item is undecided, try it with a complete outfit. If it still has no clear use, keep it outside the daily selection and choose a date to reconsider it.

### EXAMPLE

**Illustrative audit:** Your navy shirt fits, your chinos pool at the shoes and your only suitable shoes are scuffed. Keep the shirt; ask about hemming the chinos; clean the shoes and reassess their condition. This may solve Friday's outfit without buying three new items.

---

# Fit before brand

**Check fit while moving, not only while standing still.** Put on the item with the underwear, layer and shoes you will normally wear. Look from the front, side and back, then sit, reach forward and walk. Pinching, restricted movement or buttons pulling open are useful signals to try a different size or cut.

The checks below are starting points for conventional everyday cuts. Deliberately loose styles, body proportions and accessibility needs vary. A label's size is not a verdict on your body.

## T-shirts

Look for comfortable room through the chest and waist. With a conventional set-in sleeve, the seam usually sits near the shoulder edge; a dropped-shoulder design is different. Lift your arms, then let them fall. Check that the shirt covers what you want covered and does not need constant adjusting. If the body fits but the sleeves or length do not, try a different cut rather than accepting the same problem in another colour.

## Shirts

Button the shirt as you intend to wear it. Sit and reach forward: the button line should remain reasonably flat without uncomfortable pulling. If you will fasten the collar, test it fastened. Check that the sleeves let your hands move freely. For a tucked shirt, sit and stand to see whether it stays in place. A casual untucked shirt should work at that length without needing to be folded or hidden.

## Trousers/jeans

Check the waist without relying on a tightly cinched belt. Sit, bend and walk to check the rise, seat and thighs. Wear the intended shoes and look at the hem: if several folds collect above the shoe, a shorter length may help. If the waistband is comfortable but the seat or thighs pull, try another cut. Buying a larger waist alone may not solve that mismatch.

## Jackets

Try the jacket over the layer you will wear beneath it. Check shoulder comfort and how it closes without pulling. Reach forward as if driving. Sleeves or body shape may be alterable, but ask a tailor before buying an item that needs work; shoulder changes can be substantial. For conventional suit-fit illustrations, see the reference beneath the comparison below.

**Done for this check:** you can name the issue and a next step: keep, try another cut, ask about an alteration or replace. "I look wrong" is too vague to shop from.

---

## See the fit

Use these comparisons to notice **one visible issue at a time**. Then test it on your own clothes. An illustration cannot tell you whether an item is comfortable or whether a particular alteration is possible.



#### WHAT TO CHECK

##### **Pulling across the shirt**

Radiating creases around the buttons are a reason to try a roomier size or cut. Test it while seated too.



#### A WORKABLE BASELINE

##### **Room to move**

A flatter button line with comfortable room at the chest. Reach forward: the shirt should move with you.



#### WHAT TO CHECK

##### **Fabric pooling at the shoe**

Several folds make it hard to see the trouser line. Try a shorter length before replacing a useful pair.



#### A WORKABLE BASELINE

##### **A cleaner hem**

For this straight trouser, a small break at the shoe keeps the line simple. Wear your usual shoes when checking length.

AI-created fit illustrations. Assess comfort and movement as well as the photograph. A tailor can assess whether an alteration is practical.

Further reference: Suitsupply's illustrated fit guide. Checked September 2026. No affiliation.

If the shirt pulls, compare a roomier cut. If the trousers pool at the shoe, pin or fold the excess temporarily to see whether length is the issue, then have the hem assessed properly. You are checking the garment, not trying to match the illustrated body.

## The four situations

**Choose the situation you actually need next.** The four examples cover everyday casual, smart casual, a relaxed date and an occasion requiring a suit. Your work, climate or cultural setting may require something different; the invitation or venue's guidance takes priority over a general outfit example.

Build the combination in this order:

Read the invitation or check the venue if the dress code is unclear.

Choose shoes suitable for the activity, surface and weather.

Add trousers and a top that fit and work with those shoes.

Add the layer you will need outside. Try the whole outfit together.

Start with one combination you could wear this week. These are examples, not a shopping list or rules about your age. Adapt the layers, footwear and fit to your climate, body and plans.



**01**  
**Everyday casual**

Coffee, errands, a casual lunch

**Build it:** Navy T-shirt + straight blue jeans + clean cream sneakers.

**Look for:** The T-shirt skims rather than grips. The jeans sit comfortably and stop near the shoe.

**Adapt it:** Add an overshirt or weatherproof layer when needed.



**02**  
**Smart casual**

Dinner, drinks, an informal gathering

**Build it:** Pale blue Oxford shirt + stone chinos + brown suede loafers.

**Look for:** The shirt sits flat when tucked. Keep the trouser leg clean rather than tight.

**Adapt it:** Choose boots and socks for colder weather; check the venue's dress code.



**03**  
**A relaxed date**

A low-key restaurant or evening drink

**Build it:** Olive knit polo + navy trousers + brown suede boots.

**Look for:** Two quiet colours and one texture are enough. Choose clothes you can sit and move in.

**Adapt it:** Use the casual outfit for a daytime walk. Match the activity, not a performance.



**04**  
**An occasion**

An invitation that asks for a suit

**Build it:** Charcoal suit + white shirt + restrained tie + black leather shoes.

**Look for:** The jacket rests at the shoulders. Fasten it without pulling; undo it when sitting.

**Adapt it:** Read the invitation. Black tie needs a different outfit; ask the host if uncertain.

AI-created outfit illustrations. Clothing examples only; no brands, customer results or items for sale are shown.

**Example adaptation:** for a daytime walking date, use the everyday combination with comfortable walking footwear and a weatherproof layer. You do not need the evening-date outfit merely because the plan is called a date.

**If your clothes already fit but “update your look” still means nothing:** compare the complete combination, not its price or age. For an evening dinner, try your clean jeans first with the everyday T-shirt and sneakers, then with a casual shirt and suitable shoes you own. Check the venue, look at both full outfits and choose the one you prefer there. You have tested a specific change without deciding that the entire wardrobe is outdated.

If you own an equivalent piece in another colour or fabric, try it first. A useful outfit is one you can wear for the actual event, not an exact copy of the image. If something is missing, record that one gap before shopping.

---

## A 15-piece baseline

This is an **illustrative clothing capsule**, not a required purchase, a universal wardrobe count or a complete packing list. It excludes underwear, sleepwear, sportswear and specialist work clothing. Adapt it to your climate, laundry frequency and real schedule.

- 3 good plain T-shirts/polos
- 2 casual shirts
- 1 smarter shirt
- 2 trousers/chinos
- 2 jeans
- 1 casual jacket/overshirt
- 1 smart jacket/blazer
- 1 clean casual sneaker
- 1 smart casual shoe/boot
- 1 weather-appropriate outer layer

First mark which roles your existing clothes already cover. Then test whether you can make the outfits you need between laundry days. If you work outdoors and never wear a blazer, adapt the balance; if your shoes need to accommodate orthotics, choose around that need.

**Buy by the missing role.** Before adding a top, try it mentally or physically with at least two bottoms you already wear. If it needs several more purchases to become useful, leave it until you have a clear reason and budget.

---

# Colour baseline

A small palette can reduce decisions if you do not enjoy styling. Choose two or three colours already present in clothes you like, then build combinations around them. Navy, charcoal, cream, olive, mid-blue, brown and black are possible starting points, not rules.

Try **navy top, stone trousers and brown shoes**, or **cream top, blue jeans and clean sneakers**. Lay the pieces together in daylight and then try them on. If the combination feels busy, remove one competing colour or pattern and compare. If you enjoy a stronger colour and the outfit works for you, keep it.

The useful test is whether your next purchase works with what you own. You do not need a colour-season diagnosis to put together a practical everyday outfit.

---

# Shoes

Start with condition and function. Clean a pair before deciding it needs replacing; ordinary leather creasing alone is not a reason to discard shoes.

Check for worn grip, damage, discomfort, loose soles and whether the pair suits the plan. Walk in them with the socks you intend to wear. For unfamiliar shoes, test indoors within the retailer's return conditions before relying on them for a long event.

Use material-appropriate care instructions. If a useful pair is damaged, ask a repairer whether repair makes sense. Choose the missing function if you need a replacement: "comfortable smart shoes for dinner in wet weather" is a more useful brief than "something fashionable".

---

# Grooming

**Make the routine repeatable with the time and effort you want to spend.** Begin by noticing what currently gets left until just before an event.

Choose a simple arrangement for each relevant task:

**Hair:** book the next cut when the current one needs refreshing, using the barber's advice for your chosen style.

**Beard or shaving:** decide the finish you prefer, the tool you use and when you maintain it. Follow the tool instructions, especially around sensitive areas.

**Nails and visible stray hairs:** include a brief check in a routine you already have, using appropriate tools carefully.

**Skin and dental care:** keep a manageable routine; follow your clinician's advice for specific concerns rather than adding products because a makeover list says so.

**Fragrance:** optional. Use lightly and respect fragrance-free settings and other people's sensitivities.

For example, put beard maintenance beside your usual Sunday preparation and save your next haircut appointment in your calendar. **Done:** the relevant tasks have a place in your week; you do not need to buy a shelf of new products.

---

## Hair

Describe the result you need to the barber: how much time you will spend styling, what has changed about your hair and what currently bothers you. Bring a recent photo of yourself and one or two reference images with broadly similar hair texture and density.

Ask: "Would this work with my hair, what would I have to do at home, and when would it need cutting again?" If the proposed routine is more work than you want, say so before the cut. Ask to see the styling method and note the steps if useful. A style you can maintain is more useful than a result that only works in the chair.

---

## Glasses

If you wear glasses daily, check comfort and condition first. Sliding, pressure behind the ears or damaged fittings may need an optician's adjustment rather than new frames. Changes in vision need an eye-care professional's assessment.

If you want different frames, try a few shapes in similar lighting and take front and side photos. Check that they feel stable when looking down and that you like them with your everyday clothes. Ask the optician about fit and lens compatibility. There is no need to replace comfortable frames solely because you have worn them for years.

---

## The “trying too hard” filter

This is a check on **why you are buying**, not a ban on expressive clothes or an age rule. Before a non-essential purchase, ask:

**Would I wear this if nobody knew I was newly single?**

Then name the occasion, the pieces it works with and the amount you are comfortable spending. If you cannot answer yet, pause the purchase and revisit it later. If it is not urgent, give yourself time to decide before buying.

**Illustrative choice:** a jacket you like for regular dinners may be a sensible purchase. A costly watch bought only to provoke a reaction has no equivalent practical gap to fill. You can still enjoy a watch; make that choice knowingly rather than treating it as necessary equipment for being single.

---

## The four-outfit test

Choose one outfit for each relevant situation from “The four situations”. If an occasion is not part of your life, choose an equivalent you do need or leave it for when an invitation arrives.

Try on the complete outfit, including shoes and the likely outer layer.

Sit, walk and reach to check comfort.

Take a clear front and side photo in ordinary light, if that helps you compare.

Identify one adjustment, make it and check again. Avoid changing every piece at once.

Save the useful combinations in a private phone album with labels such as “casual lunch” or “dinner”.

If you want feedback, ask a trusted person a specific question: “Does this shirt pull when I sit?” is easier to act on than “Do I look good?” The target is a comfortable outfit suited to the place, not approval from everybody who sees it.

**Done:** you have a combination you can repeat and a short list of any genuine gaps. Getting dressed for the next plan should not require restarting the search.

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## FAQ

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### QUICK ANSWERS

**01 Do I need expensive clothes?**

No. Start with comfort, condition and combinations you can use. Set a budget for a named gap, and compare repair or alteration with replacement where relevant.

**02 Should I hire a stylist?**

Only if the convenience is worth the cost to you. If you do, bring your actual schedule, budget, preferences and existing clothes rather than asking for a completely different identity.

**03 How often should I update the wardrobe?**

Check when seasons, body size, work or plans change. A twice-yearly review is an optional reminder, not a reason to replace clothes that still work.

**04 Should I dress younger for dating?**

Dress for the person you are and the plan you have. There is no need to copy a younger person's wardrobe or avoid something you enjoy solely because of your age.

**05 What if I hate shopping?**

Create the gap list first. Choose one category, check measurements and return conditions, then try the item with a complete outfit before deciding to keep it.

---

# You're done when...

## YOU'RE DONE WHEN

- ☐ Every regularly worn item fits.
- ☐ You have one reliable outfit for four common situations.
- ☐ Your shoes suit your actual plans and are in good condition.
- ☐ Hair/grooming has a maintenance schedule.
- ☐ You have separated worn-out, uncomfortable and unused pieces from the working wardrobe.
- ☐ You can get dressed for dinner without starting from zero.

FIELD NOTE 06

# What Normal Looks Like Now

Handle the messages, bookings and everyday tools you actually need.

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## OUTCOME

You can make plans, prepare digital essentials and choose which unfamiliar tools are worth learning.

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# You do not need to know every new thing

You may be comfortable with technology at work and still find a particular ticket app or social situation unfamiliar. Start with the task that is causing friction. You do not need to study every platform or replace methods that already work for you.

This guide gives you practical defaults and examples. **Social expectations vary by person, place and situation.** Asking a straightforward question is often more useful than guessing an unwritten rule.

## THEN

An older pattern you may recognise. It is background, not an assumption about your skills.

## NOW

The choices you may encounter in that particular task.

## WHAT'S NORMAL

A workable starting approach that you can adjust with the people involved.

## DON'T OVERTHINK

The part that does not require expertise or a complicated rule.

## WATCH OUT

A preventable mistake and what to do instead.

Choose one upcoming task, such as using a booked ticket or confirming dinner. Work through the relevant section and test the practical step before you need it.

---

# Messaging

## Then

A conversation may have stayed on the phone or in text messages.

## Now

You may receive messages through SMS, WhatsApp, Messenger, Instagram or an app used by a particular group. The immediate problem is often knowing **where the conversation is happening and what reply is needed.**

## What's normal

Use the channel already in use if it works for you. If it does not, ask to switch: "I rarely check Instagram. Could we use text for arrangements?" Agree the change rather than silently missing messages.

For a plan, include the decision in your reply: "Saturday at 10 works. See you at the station café." For a question, answer it before adding another topic. If the message needs a longer conversation, suggest a call.

## Don't overthink

There is no single correct response delay. People work, drive, care for family and leave notifications off. Reply when you reasonably can; if a decision is time-sensitive, state the deadline rather than expecting the other person to infer it.

## Watch out

A delivered or read indicator does not explain why someone has not answered. Avoid sending several messages to interpret the silence. If you need to confirm a practical plan, one clear check is more useful: "Just checking whether tomorrow is still on. I'll make other arrangements if I haven't heard by this evening."

**Try now:** open the channel for your next plan, confirm the missing detail and put the agreed time in your calendar. You have finished when neither person has to guess where or when to meet.

---

## Voice calls

Choose the method by urgency, complexity and the relationship. If you normally call a close friend, you do not need permission for every conversation. For a newer contact, a brief message can avoid interrupting them.

Try: "Would you have ten minutes for a call this evening? Easier than sorting the arrangements by text." Offer a time and say what the call is about. For a time-sensitive practical matter, call and leave a concise message if needed; repeated calls should not be your default follow-up.

If you cannot talk, a useful reply is: "Can't speak now. I can call after six." The objective is agreeing a workable time, not learning whether phones are fashionable.

---

## Group chats

A group may mix jokes, updates and actual arrangements. You do not have to respond to every message. **Find the decision or action that concerns you.**

Use this simple routine:

Check who is in the group and what it is for before sharing personal information.

Find the latest arrangement. Ask "Is Saturday at 10 still the plan?" if several options are buried in the conversation.

Confirm your attendance clearly when someone needs numbers. A reaction may acknowledge a joke; it may not tell an organiser whether to book you a seat.

Put the agreed details in your calendar.

Mute notifications if the volume is distracting and choose when to check the group. If available and useful, pin the conversation for easier access.

Move a personal conversation to a direct message, after checking the recipient. Do not forward somebody's private message or screenshot to the group without considering their permission. If you leave a practical group, make sure you have another way to receive arrangements you still need.

---

## Photos

### Then

You may have relied on photographs taken at family occasions rather than choosing a picture specifically for a profile.

### Now

Choose photos for a specific purpose. **A messaging profile may need only one clear portrait.** A dating profile can use several images that show your face, everyday appearance and interests. You do not need to create a public photographic record of your new life.

To make a usable portrait:

Ask a friend to take a few pictures, or use a supported phone and its timer.

Stand or sit near daylight with a simple background. Face the light rather than putting a bright window behind you.

Use clothes you normally wear and check that your face is visible and in focus.

Select a photo that still looks like you now. Crop distractions without changing your features or body.

Preview the image in the actual profile; a circular crop can cut off a face that looked fine in the original.

For a fuller profile, add a recent full-body image and an activity photo if you want them. Ask other identifiable adults before using their photos, keep children's images private, and check backgrounds for addresses, work details or documents. Avoid reusing an old couple photo simply because it is the only one already available.

**Done:** the image suits its purpose and somebody meeting you would recognise you. Professional photography is optional.

---

## Social media

Use a platform only if it serves a purpose you want: keeping up with friends, finding a local group or following an interest. An inactive account is not a personal failure.

If you keep an account, open its privacy and audience settings. Check who can see your posts, profile details and tagged content. Review contact information and location sharing, then remove details you do not want public. Menu names differ, so use the platform's current Help page for the exact steps.

Before posting about the separation, ask whether this information belongs in public and whether it involves somebody else's privacy. You can share a night out without using it to prove that life is going well. For photographs of children, choose a privacy-conscious approach agreed with the relevant parent or guardian rather than making public posting the default.

**One useful action:** review the audience on your most recent post. Knowing who can see it matters more than learning a new posting format.

---

## Invitations

A plan becomes usable when the activity, time and place are agreed. "Free for coffee Thursday at six at the station café?" gives the other person something specific to answer.

After acceptance:

- confirm the final time and location in the same conversation;
- clarify anything that needs booking or payment;
- add the details to your calendar;
- say promptly if something changes.

If you receive an invitation with missing details, ask: "Sounds good. Which venue and what time?" If you cannot attend, decline clearly rather than leaving the organiser guessing. You do not need to explain every part of your diary.

---

# Booking

**The goal is to arrive with a usable reservation or ticket, not merely a payment receipt.** The exact method varies by provider, so follow the instructions for your booking.

If you have not booked yet:

Open the provider's official booking page. Choose the correct service, location, date, time and number of people.

Read the total price, what is included and the cancellation or change terms. Check any accessibility or other arrangements you need before committing.

Review the details before submitting. If the process is unclear, stop and contact the provider rather than guessing or paying twice.

Find the actual confirmation and booking reference. Save them where you can find them again; a pending payment alone does not confirm a reservation.

Before leaving home:

Check the date, time, location and name on the confirmation. Check whether you need to arrive early.

Find how entry works: a booking reference, printed ticket, wallet pass or ticket inside the provider's app. Install an app only if needed and obtain it through the provider's verified instructions or your device's official app store.

Open the ticket now. If you cannot log in, recover access through the provider's official site or app while you have time.

Save an offline pass or print a copy **only if the provider supports that method**. Do not assume a screenshot will work; some tickets use changing codes or require the app.

Check your phone's charge, the venue's entry instructions and any required identification. Know where to get help if the ticket still will not open.

## EXAMPLE

**Illustrative booking check:** Friday's confirmation says the ticket is inside the venue's app. On Thursday you install it, sign in and find the ticket. The venue says screenshots are not accepted, so you follow its app instructions and bring a charged phone. The email alone would not have completed the task.

If you prefer a non-app option, ask the provider before buying whether a box-office, telephone or printed alternative exists. Availability varies; finding that out early gives you a choice.

---

# Payments

Choose payment methods you understand and that the place accepts. A physical card may be enough for many plans; a phone wallet is optional. Cash acceptance and cashless requirements vary, so check when it matters.

Before relying on a method you have not used before:

- Follow your bank or wallet provider's official setup instructions.

- Learn how to open it and confirm a payment on your device.

- Check how you will pay if your phone is unavailable, such as carrying an accepted physical card.

- Before approving payment, read the amount, currency and recipient or merchant details.

For shared costs, agree the amount and method directly with the person. Verify unexpected requests before transferring anything. This guide does not recommend financial products; you are setting up a reliable way to pay for the plans you have chosen.

---

# Travel

Prepare for the **next actual trip**, rather than downloading every travel app. Open each essential item before departure: transport ticket, accommodation details, directions and the information needed to reach the destination.

Put the key details in one place you can find quickly. Keep the booking reference and address available through the provider's supported offline method or a printed copy when useful. Check which tickets still require an app, connection or identification. Protect sensitive documents rather than placing them in a public folder or shared photo album.

For an unfamiliar journey, check travel time to the departure point, transfers, accessibility needs and how you will reach the accommodation. Pack the necessary charger and a usable payment backup. For international travel, verify current entry and document requirements with official authorities and your carrier; a generic checklist cannot establish eligibility.

**Test:** can you find the departure time, ticket and destination address without searching through several conversations? If not, organise those three items first.

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# Going out alone

You do not need company for every plan you want to make. Choose an activity with an obvious purpose, such as a film, exhibition, lunch or day trip. Start at a scale and location that feel manageable to you.

Check the practical details, choose a time and go. A short script is enough for a restaurant: "Table for one, please." You can bring a book, speak to someone or simply enjoy the activity. There is no requirement to make the outing social.

If you did not enjoy a particular place, choose a different format next time. This is about keeping your choices available, not proving that you should always be happy alone. Your People has a fuller first-outing method if this is the main gap you want to work on.

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## Meeting people

A recurring setting gives you something shared to talk about and the possibility of another conversation. It does not guarantee friendship, and one-off events can also be worthwhile.

Choose a setting you would enjoy and can access: a class, volunteering session, club, community event or gathering through friends. Start with the common activity: "Is this your first session too?" or "Do you know how this part works?" Listen, keep the exchange brief if the other person is busy, and say hello if you meet again.

When conversation is welcome, suggest a small next step connected to the setting: "I'm getting coffee after this. Would you like to join?" Accept a decline without treating it as a personal assessment. For help finding and trying a suitable group, use "Stop trying to 'make friends'" in Your People.

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## Dating baseline

**You can leave dating for later or decide it is not something you want.** This section is orientation, not a task you must complete to move on with life.

If you are interested, choose one way of meeting people that suits you: an app, an introduction or a social setting. Be accurate about your situation and what you want. Use recent photos if you create a profile, suggest a manageable public meeting when both people are comfortable, and make your own travel arrangements.

Do not assume that messaging, meeting once or physical affection means exclusivity. Discuss expectations when they matter; willingness and consent are never implied by a date or by paying. If the interaction makes you uncomfortable, you can stop it.

The Modern Dating Catch-Up bonus provides example messages, a profile method and a first-date plan. You do not need to open an account to understand these basics.

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## Safety / scams

An unexpected message may imitate a familiar company or person. **Pause before opening a login link or acting on a money request.** Open the service yourself through its known app or website, or contact it using details you independently know are genuine. Enable multi-factor authentication where available and keep your devices updated. These defaults follow the FTC's phishing guidance.

If a message claims to be a relative who urgently needs money, call them on a number you already had, or verify with another trusted contact. Do not use the new number as its own proof.

If you entered a password through a suspicious link, go to the genuine service to change it and follow its account-recovery instructions. If money or card details were involved, contact your bank or payment provider promptly through a known channel. Use the official fraud-reporting route for your country. Do not continue the conversation simply because the sender promises to undo it.

**Try now:** choose one important account, such as your email, and check its security settings through the genuine service. Follow its own setup instructions rather than sharing codes with someone who offers to do it for you.

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## “Am I too old for this?” filter

Replace the age question with a task question: **Would this remove a problem I actually have?**

Name the situation, such as finding a ticket at the door.

Decide whether you need the tool or whether a simpler supported option exists.

Learn the one function you need using the provider's current instructions.

Test it before the situation becomes time-sensitive.

If it is still awkward, ask a trusted person to show you once, then repeat the steps yourself without sharing passwords. If it serves no useful purpose, leave it. There is no need to become enthusiastic about a tool to use it competently.

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# FAQ

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## QUICK ANSWERS

**01 Do I need Instagram?**

No. Use it if it supports something you want to do. For practical arrangements, agree a channel you actually check with the people involved.

**02 Do I need mobile payments?**

Not for every situation. Check what is accepted where you are going and keep a usable alternative. A phone wallet is a convenience, not a requirement to appear current.

**03 Is calling someone now considered rude?**

No universal rule applies. Consider urgency and the relationship. If you are unsure whether a newer contact can talk, ask for a convenient time.

**04 Do I need professional photos?**

Usually you can start with a clear, recent image taken in good light. Check that it suits the purpose and does not expose information you want private.

**05 How much technology should I learn?**

Enough to complete the tasks you use. If a service changes, use its current help instructions for the changed step rather than relearning every feature.

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# You're done when...

## YOU'RE DONE WHEN

- |                          |                                                                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Your main profile photo is current.                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | You understand the messaging channels you actually use.                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Digital tickets/bookings no longer surprise you.                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | You have a simple payment/travel setup.                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | You can make and confirm plans efficiently.                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | You know the dating baseline even if you do not intend to date yet.     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | You know which modern tools are useful to you and which you can ignore. |

# My practical tools

Turn a useful idea into a small plan you can return to. Start with one row; the other spaces can wait.

## Life Admin responsibility register

Start with one obligation that keeps slipping. Record who owns it and when it needs attention. Add a reminder in your calendar; this workbook does not send reminders.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div><div>Entry 1</div><div><div>Responsibility or renewal</div><div></div></div><div><div>Who handles it?</div><div></div></div><div><div>Next due date and repeat frequency</div><div></div></div><div><div>Next step or where to find the record</div><div></div></div></div> | <div><div>Entry 2</div><div><div>Responsibility or renewal</div><div></div></div><div><div>Who handles it?</div><div></div></div><div><div>Next due date and repeat frequency</div><div></div></div><div><div>Next step or where to find the record</div><div></div></div></div> |
| <div><div>Entry 3</div><div><div>Responsibility or renewal</div><div></div></div><div><div>Who handles it?</div><div></div></div><div><div>Next due date and repeat frequency</div><div></div></div><div><div>Next step or where to find the record</div><div></div></div></div> | <div><div>Entry 4</div><div><div>Responsibility or renewal</div><div></div></div><div><div>Who handles it?</div><div></div></div><div><div>Next due date and repeat frequency</div><div></div></div><div><div>Next step or where to find the record</div><div></div></div></div> |

# Weekly anchors

Give recurring tasks a realistic place in the week. Start with one anchor and include a smaller fallback for a difficult week.

Entry 1

Anchor or task

Day and time

Time needed

Smaller fallback

Entry 2

Anchor or task

Day and time

Time needed

Smaller fallback

Entry 3

Anchor or task

Day and time

Time needed

Smaller fallback

Entry 4

Anchor or task

Day and time

Time needed

Smaller fallback

# Buy Now / Buy Later

Separate a missing essential from an upgrade. Check what you already have and choose a review date for anything that can wait.

Entry 1

Item

Decision

Why it is needed / what I already have

Next step or review date

Entry 2

Item

Decision

Why it is needed / what I already have

Next step or review date

Entry 3

Item

Decision

Why it is needed / what I already have

Next step or review date

Entry 4

Item

Decision

Why it is needed / what I already have

Next step or review date

# Home baseline

Choose one basic function, such as sleep, washing or meals. Define what good enough looks like and the smallest step toward it.

Entry 1

Room or daily function

What does good enough look like?

Smallest next step

Status

Entry 2

Room or daily function

What does good enough look like?

Smallest next step

Status

Entry 3

Room or daily function

What does good enough look like?

Smallest next step

Status

Entry 4

Room or daily function

What does good enough look like?

Smallest next step

Status