



Meal Planning Guide



Knowing what you're going to cook each night a week in advance is a big time-saver. It can also save you money and relieve stress. Planning a week of evening meals with your children is a great way to spend time with them, and the more input they have in the planning process, the more likely they are to eat the meals. Use this guide to plan five weeknight meals and watch your life get a little calmer.

STEP 1: THINK

What foods do you already have on hand? Make a list of vegetables, grains, and protein sources (for example, meat, eggs, tuna, and beans) that could be used in a meal. Don't forget about what's in your pantry and freezer!

⇒ Make a list of foods on hand.

FOODS WE HAVE ON HAND

STEP 2: PLAN

Use the [What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl](http://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/) (<http://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/>) to find recipes that use some of ingredients you have on hand. You're sure to find low-cost, healthy recipes that your family will enjoy. You can also use your favorite cookbook or family recipes.

⇒ List at least four recipes that can be used as a main dish.

RECIPES FOR MAIN DISHES

STEP 2: PLAN (continued)

Plan some simple menus for the week using this checklist:

- ◇ Do you have a type of protein?
 - ◇ Do you have a grain? Is it a whole grain?
 - ◇ Do you have a vegetable or fruit side dish?
 - ◇ What will you have to drink?
 - ◇ Can leftovers from one meal be used in another meal?
- ⇒ Plan out a week's menu using the schedule to the right.

SUNDAY	
MONDAY	
TUESDAY	
WEDNESDAY	
THURSDAY	
FRIDAY	
SATURDAY	

STEP 3: SHOP

Now that you know what you're going to have this week, make your grocery list.

FRESH FRUITS AND VEGGIES	CANNED FOODS	BAKING PRODUCTS AND SEASONING	BREAD, CEREALS, AND GRAINS
MEAT, POULTRY, AND FISH	FROZEN FOODS	DAIRY AND REFRIGERATED FOODS	OTHER

