

MEAL PLANNING

A
How-to
Guide!

STEP ONE: SCHEDULING

Grab your planner & put the following in your calendar:

1. Meal planning time (30 min/week)
2. Meal times: Breakfast, lunch, dinner, & snacks. (15-45 min each)
3. Grocery shopping time (40-90 min)
4. Food prep/cooking time:
 - Be realistic about when this is possible.
 - Try timing yourself to see how long it takes you to cook various meals. (Don't forget clean up time!)
5. Keep these times as regular as possible to make them part of your routine.

STEP TWO: SAVVY MEAL PLANNING

1. Plan your week's meal around the perishable ingredients you already have. That way, no food goes to waste & you have to get creative!
2. Look at your schedule & figure out how many breakfasts, lunches, dinners, & snacks you need to prepare before your next shopping trip.
3. Decide what to eat for each meal & snack - make a list.

MEAL PLANNING TIPS!

- If you are trying a new recipe, make sure to read all the way to the end to avoid surprises later!
- Consolidate meal prep work:
 - Prep multiple meals at once to prevent relentless cycles of cooking & cleaning.
 - Do prep tasks such as washing & chopping veggies right after shopping to cut down on cleaning & prep time during the week
- Keep a basic stock of non-perishable items on hand for times when you aren't able to shop. For example:
 - On the shelf: pasta, marinara sauce, rice, canned tuna, nut butters, beans, lentils, soups, oatmeal, soy milk, cereal
 - In the freezer: frozen vegetables, fruits, meats (or veg proteins), sliced bread. If you cook extra beans or grains, freeze them.

MORE TIPS:

- Maintain a list of your favorite snacks & meals to refer to when you're making a grocery list & feel uninspired.
- Keep a grocery list on your phone or fridge. Add items to your list when you run out or when meal inspiration hits.
- Repetition of meals is great for cutting down on planning and prep time, but know your limit, because if you get too bored you'll be tempted to stop following your plan.
- To cut down on cooking time, focus your efforts on making large batches of meals that freeze & reheat well.
 - Freeze in individual portions to make transport and reheating easier.
 - Soups, stews, & items high in liquid tend to freeze well.
- If part of your plan is to take snacks or meals to-go, make sure you schedule time to prep & pack.
- Make ahead breakfasts: Overnight oats, breakfast/egg muffins, frittata, hard boiled eggs & fruit.
- Pack items that tend to get soggy in a separate container.

WHOA! I DON'T THINK I CAN DO ALL OF THAT!

Don't worry; you don't have to do it all at once. Begin by giving yourself credit for everything you are already doing. Then, pick **one** manageable change you'd like to focus on.

Ask yourself, "What will it take to make this change happen?" One way to answer this is by picturing yourself doing it, & identifying potential challenges or preparations that will need to take place.

Then, work on implementing this change for a few weeks. Track your progress, & notice what happens with curiosity rather than judgment.

Experiment, & make adjustments to your plan if needed. If you were successful with making a change, great! Keep it up, & choose your next change to focus on. Steady progress will have more of a lasting effect than making a huge change all at once.

WANT TO TALK MORE ABOUT THIS?

**SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH A
SHOP HEALTH EDUCATOR AT
SHOP.UCSC.EDU**

