

Planners and Planning

Where to start? That is the question.

There is an old saying in the business field: *if you fail to plan, you plan to fail*. Just think of all those unfinished projects you have lying around.

Being a writer, I am bombarded with plans. I need to develop business plans, writing plans, life plans, travel plans, family plans, education plans, marketing plans... you get the picture.

Why is planning important?

For me, it keeps me on track. Well, that is the aim. Growing up, any plans my parents had were never verbalised or written. I carried on in much the same way, stumbling from day to day, until I stumbled upon a TV program (can't remember the name but it had something to do with education). The concept of time management and breaking things to be done into tasks, hit me between the eyes.

Over the years, I have learnt the following:

- If I have a written down timetable/schedule I can generally organise myself, so I am not so stressed out.
- If I don't have a list of tasks to do for the day, things don't get done – ever in some cases. You Tube wins the day!

How Do I Plan?

Step 1 Buy a planner/diary.

I buy next year's diary in about September. (They tend to come out in time for Father's Day here in Queensland). I go for the cheapest.

I prefer a day-to-a-page format. A friend likes the disc-bound planners. My granddaughter likes a vertical week to an opening format.

I spend a few weeks ruling it up.

- Down the side I rule a line about an inch (2.5cm) from the edge for allotting appointments, meetings etc. There are usually pre-printed times.
- I rule another line along the top, about 6 lines down, for writing tasks to be done that day.
- The large area left over I use more as a daily journal.

| January | | 2022 |
|------------------|---|------|
| 31 Monday | <i>I make a note of the weather here.</i> | |
| 08.00 | Tasks | |
| Appointments | | |
| 09.00 | | |
| 10.00 | <i>Notes on events and actions undertaken; thought of the day etc</i> | |
| 11.00 | | |
| 12.00 | | |
| 13.00 | | |
| 14.00 | | |
| 15.00 | | |
| 16.00 | | |
| 17.00 | | |
| 18.00 | | |
| 19.00 | | |
| 20.00 | | |

- IF there is a note page at the front, I rule it up as a Year at Glance where I make note of regular events and bills due. Dates are not necessary. I also use different colour pens for coding and ease of reference.

Year at a Glance

| | |
|-----------|----------|
| January | February |
| | |
| | |
| March | April |
| | |
| | |
| May | June |
| | |
| | |
| July | August |
| | |
| | |
| September | October |
| | |
| | |
| November | December |
| | |
| | |

Step 2 Adapt

Over the years I have learnt that no diary/planner does what I want it to.

The diaries I tend to buy are very basic, so I adapt it by adding extra pages. This results in a diary that is about one and a half times as thick as it was when bought.

Pages I add include:

- Monthly Calendar, (The diaries I buy do not have monthly calendars.)
- Month at a glance (where I make a note of public holidays, birthdays, trips, bills due etc)

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|------|
| January | | | | | | | 2022 |
| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday | |
| | | | | | 1 | 2 | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 31 Notes | | | | | | | |
| School Resumes | | | | | | | |

Month at a Glance
The secret of getting ahead is getting started. (Mark Twain)
January

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Public Holidays & Interest Days | Bills Due |
| 1 New Years Day | Phone |
| 26 Australia Day | |
| School Resumes | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| Birthdays & Anniversaries | Trips |
| | |
| | |
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| | |
| | |
| Special Events | Tasks |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

- Weekly timetable – in 1hour slots (It allows me to cover travelling time)
- A Habit and Goal tracker.

Weekly Planner – _____

| Time | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| - 6 am | | | | | | | |
| 6-7 am | | | | | | | |
| 7-8 am | | | | | | | |
| 8-9 am | | | | | | | |
| 9-10 am | | | | | | | |
| 10-11 am | | | | | | | |
| 11-12 pm | | | | | | | |
| 12-1 pm | | | | | | | |
| 1-2 pm | | | | | | | |
| 2-3 pm | | | | | | | |
| 3-4 pm | | | | | | | |
| 4-5 pm | | | | | | | |
| 5-6 pm | | | | | | | |
| 6-7 pm | | | | | | | |
| 7-8 pm | | | | | | | |
| 8-9 pm | | | | | | | |

Goal Planner & Habit Tracker

| Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Writing | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Health: | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Self Care: | | | | | | |
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- 2 sets of Vertical calendars
 - 1 has 3 months per page I use for my Writing events
 - 1 with 3 columns per month, with 1 month per page. I use this for my digital marketing tasks: 1 Column for my Blog, another for my website, and the third for my Facebook.

| Date | January | February | March |
|------|----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 | New Year's Day | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | RWG | RWG |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | | | |
| 8 | | | |
| 9 | | | |
| 10 | | | |
| 11 | WAMB - Online | | |
| 12 | | FAWQ AGM - | FAWQ Gen Mtg |
| 13 | | | |
| 14 | | | |
| 15 | | | |
| 16 | | | |
| 17 | | | |
| 18 | | | |
| 19 | | WAMB Master Class | |
| 20 | | | |
| 21 | | | |
| 22 | | | |
| 23 | | | |
| 24 | | | |
| 25 | | | |
| 26 | Australia Day | | |
| 27 | | | |
| 28 | | | |
| 29 | | | |
| 30 | | | |
| 31 | | | |

| Date | January | January | January |
|------|----------------|---------|---------|
| 1 | New Year's Day | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | | | |
| 8 | | | |
| 9 | | | |
| 10 | | | |
| 11 | | | |
| 12 | | | |
| 13 | | | |
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| 16 | | | |
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| 18 | | | |
| 19 | | | |
| 20 | | | |
| 21 | | | |
| 22 | | | |
| 23 | | | |
| 24 | | | |
| 25 | | | |
| 26 | Australia Day | | |
| 27 | | | |
| 28 | | | |
| 29 | | | |
| 30 | | | |
| 31 | | | |

I made the Month at a Glance, Weekly Timetable, and the Goal/habit tracker in Word tables. The monthly Calendar I created from scratch in Excel. The vertical calendars are an Excel template I downloaded from the internet, though they are easy enough to create from scratch.

I colour the weekends a different colour for ease of organisation. It is hard to pick a Wednesday if you don't know where Saturday is. The red blocks are public holidays, and the brown Block, means that day is not a viable day for the month.

Step 3 Use it

As soon as I get my diary, I grab the highlighters and go to work.

On the inside of the front and back covers, is a yearly planner. The front inside cover is the current year while the back is the next year. I use them for large chunks of time. I use different highlighters for different activities. These colours are then carried over to the monthly, weekly and daily time slots. I mark out:

- Public holidays – Pink
- School holidays (They do have an impact on events etc) Green
- Writing festivals etc Blue

The Monthly Calendar I place events/appointments etc in the day. No times as there isn't much room. But it helps to know where you have days with no activity, when looking a month or two ahead.

The Weekly Timetable I colour in the blocks of time an event/appointment will take. This allows me to see where I have spare time to do something. It helps too if you mark in travelling time.

On the actual day, I do the same though I tend to just run the highlighter down the side. Some people will even block the travel time needed to get to and from the event. I also use a pink highlighter to colour in the date of public days

When do I fill it in?

I try not to work too far ahead as things tend to change, so perhaps only 2 weeks ahead. I do go ahead and fill in the 'permanent' days that don't move, such as birthdays, public holidays, doctors' appointments.

One thing I am trying to do more of this year, is planning the next day the night before.

Step 4 Keep it Handy and Keep it OPEN.

No matter whether you use a paper diary, or the calendar on your phone, if you don't **use** it, you have wasted your time.

Other thoughts

- Decorating a planner. While I believe a bit of decorating can have a beneficial effect, I believe a planner's function is first and foremost that of a tool. Decorating should never overtake the primary reason why you bought it in the first place or get in the way of its functionality. I often glue small photos, tickets, and even brochures on the page of the event.
- This is MY way of planning my life. It isn't yours, but I hope it has given you some inspiration and ideas.
- I gained some ideas from YouTube, in particular a channel called Kell of a Plan by [Heather Kell](#). I watched a variety of channels and read a variety of Articles on the topic, but I found Heather to be the most useful to me. I take what I can apply to my life and forget the rest.

I hope this has given you some ideas for planning life in general.