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How Many Persons Is a Homemaker?

Michigan State University Extension Service

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# How Many Persons Is a Homemaker?

By Helen E. Bell\*



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

YOU OFTEN FIND yourself being some of many persons each day. As a homemaker, your chief aim is to contribute toward a satisfying life for all members of your family. A family lives by a pattern of its own making and no two are alike. You follow your family's pattern as you carry out each day's activities, and it takes some juggling to manage this many-person job of homemaking. Check the list below to see how many persons you are during one day.

- **Secretary-Treasurer** — write business letters, keep family accounts, pay bills.
- **Chief Chef** — plan menus and prepare meals.
- **Purchasing Agent** — buy groceries, clothing, furnishings, and countless other items every family needs and wants.
- **Laundress** — gather, sort, wash clothes; iron; care for drip-drys.
- **Nurse** — take temperatures, soothe fretful children, prepare hot water bottles and ice packs, bandage cut fingers and skinned knees.
- **Teacher** — guide the many things children learn at home; develop interest in books, music, nature, and other activities.
- **Seamstress** — sew on buttons, make patches, mend rips; construct new garments.
- **Counselor** — answer questions children ask and help them learn to accept responsibility; advise other family members, neighbors, and friends.
- **Food Processor** — can and freeze vegetables from the garden; cut and wrap meats for freezing; make pickles and jelly.
- **Electrical Engineer** — maintain household appliances and learn to operate them efficiently.
- **Chauffeur** — drive the children to 4-H meetings, church socials, music lessons; drive to town for a tool your husband needs.
- **Maintenance Manager** — see that repairs to the house are made; plan the yearly, monthly, and weekly cleaning schedules; supervise family labor.
- **Gardener** — plant vegetables, pull weeds, cultivate, gather produce.
- **Companion** — to your husband and children in enjoying family activities.
- **Community Member** — participate in church, social, school, civic organizations; strive to make your community the best place in which to live.
- **Partner** — help provide the family income through outside employment; supplement income by home production of many items.
- **Spark-Plug** — arouse interest in family projects, hobbies, vacation trips, educational pursuits.
- **Decision-Maker** — decide whether that topcoat is worn out and ready to be replaced; decide whether the family can go to Aunt Jane's for Sunday dinner; help decide whether money is available for a new car this year.
- **Mediator** — suggest compromises acceptable to family members wanting different things; serve to clarify issues in community disagreements.
- **Interior Decorator** — choose furnishings pleasing to all family members and create a harmonious home background.
- **Hostess** — to your husband's boss, the minister and his wife, friends, and relatives.
- **Coordinator** — of the many activities in which all family members take part.

## Pattern for Living

You use a pattern to manage many activities. This pattern is a guide just as a pattern is a guide when you make a dress. A dress pattern starts with a style a designer has created. Your family is the designer of the pattern you follow in carrying out day-by-day activities. The pattern for living design starts with family members deciding what is important to them, and many times these decisions are not made consciously. Families consider such things as good health, family happiness, education for the children, security for future years, participation in the church, and a comfortable and convenient

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home as important. Wanting these things and many others influences activities of all family members and forms the basis for their family living design.

From a pattern you cut pieces of fabric to make a dress. It will never become a dress unless you put the pieces together. Coordinating the pieces of fabric and making the dress are usually one person's responsibility. So it is with family living. All members in a family design their pattern for living, and this pattern consists of many pieces. You—the homemaker—are the coordinator. You carry out many activities in behalf of all family members after the family decides on the pattern. Your many-person activities keep the family going. Remember that your family's pattern for living is different from every other family's pattern.

If music lessons for a child are important, you will take time to see that he practices and takes lessons even though you may need to postpone the washing or ironing. If taking part in church and community activities is important, time is provided for attendance at church, P.T.A., Extension, 4-H, Grange, or social club activities even though mending clothes or baking a pie must be delayed.

#### Goals

Family goals are the things that all members consider important and want to obtain. Your family must know what it wants before it can work toward getting it. Goals are basic pieces in the family pattern for living. A family has many goals and these goals are constantly changing. As each goal is reached, others become of first importance and everyone works together to obtain the new goals.

Each family sets its own goals. The same things are not important to all families. Your family may want a vacation trip to see other parts of the country. It's a goal and you work together to achieve it. Another family may not have the same interest in seeing other parts of the country; therefore, a vacation trip is not its goal. This family may prefer to buy good books everyone can enjoy. Recognizing family goals and working together to achieve them is a step in the designing of each family's pattern for living.

#### Resources

When making a dress, you can select from a wide range of fabrics, threads, fastenings, and trimmings. These are the resources. You choose the ones most suitable to the individual and the style of dress. You have a variety of resources from which to choose when working toward a goal. Your family may choose to use money, knowledge, skill, time, equipment, talent, energy, community services, or others. You may use a few or many of these resources in working toward one goal. You can substitute one resource for another and cultivate new resources.

If your family thinks a comfortable home is important, you may want to paint the walls of the living room as one of your goals this year. Family members consider the resources available, such as money, time, knowledge of paints, skill in painting, and so on. If there is enough

money, you may hire professional painters to do the work. This saves time for other tasks that may be of greater importance to family members. If money is not available, family members may use their time, may seek knowledge about paints, may cultivate skill in applying the paint, and do the painting themselves. It is often possible to substitute resources in this way and stretch others that are limited.

Another large piece of the pattern for family living is resources available. Consider all, then choose those that may be used most effectively in achieving a goal. This piece of pattern must be flexible. It is possible that circumstances will affect the choice of resources at different times. One year, there may be money to hire professional painters. Another time, money may be lacking and the family does the painting.

#### Planning

You follow the guide sheet that comes with your dress pattern when you assemble fabric pieces. Your family plans its guide sheet. The guide sheet or plan one family makes won't fit another; each family works out its own. The seamstress who doesn't use the guide sheet may find she has to do a lot of ripping and resewing before she finishes the dress. A seamstress who follows the guide sheet step by step produces a finished garment with few mistakes, and has a feeling of satisfaction from a job well done. If your family plans in a haphazard fashion, you may find mistakes to undo in making life what you want it to be. But when your family follows a carefully made plan, you get what you want with few errors and much satisfaction. The seamstress may ask for advice or help when constructing a dress. You do have many sources of help and advice when making the family plan. Careful planning helps the family get more things needed and wanted.

Following the plan, you fit together the goals and the resources just as you followed the pattern guide to put the dress together. Thread holds the fabric pieces together and makes a whole garment possible. Management is the thread that holds the pieces of a family's life in proper position to make it complete. You put your family's plan into action through days spent in your many-person activities. It isn't always easy to keep all these activities in balance. If you are a good manager, you can keep one activity from demanding more than its fair share of time and effort. Carrying out your family's plan in a way that brings the most satisfaction to everyone results in the kind of family life every member wants.



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