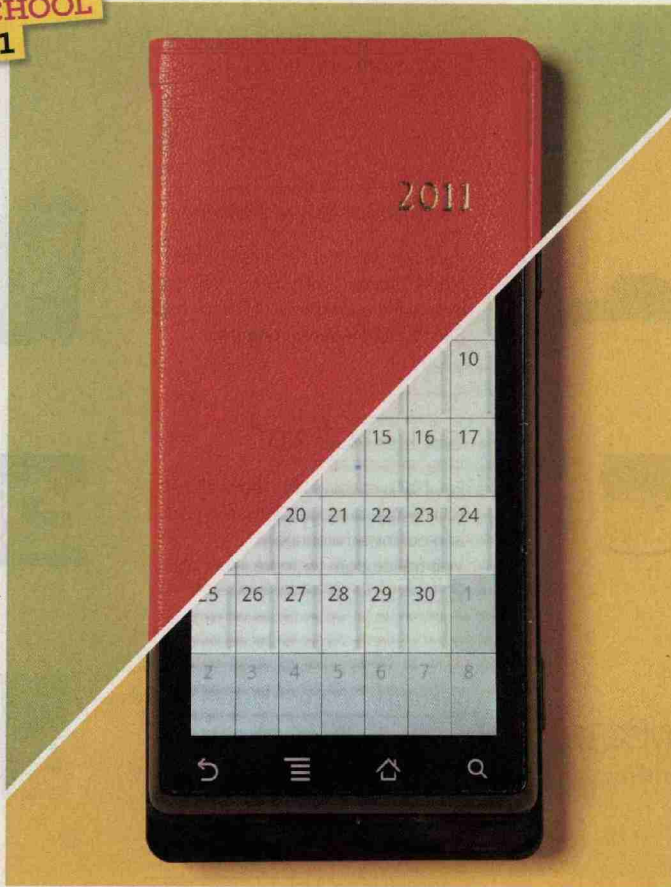


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BACK TO SCHOOL 2011



Streamline Your Family Calendar

BY TARYN MOHRMAN

When you make your kid's doctor's appointment do you type it into the calendar on your computer, punch it into the one on your cell phone, text your spouse so he can add it to his, then e-mail yourself a reminder to paste it onto the wall calendar in the kitchen? And you still fear that on the day of the appointment you'll check the one calendar you forgot to update...and miss it?

If you are nodding along, you're so not alone. Thankfully, there are smart scheduling assistants out there that can do the work for you, so you can stop spending time organizing the technology that's supposed to keep you, ahem, organized. Our guide to digital calendars will help you finally make peace with your planner and help you focus on experiencing life's events instead of constantly trying to remember when and where they're happening.

5 THINGS TO LOOK FOR

These digital scheduling features don't always come standard, but we consider them absolute must-haves!

1 | AUTO UPDATES "A calendar that updates in real time is essential," says Jodie Watson, organizational expert and founder of supremeorganization.com. If your daughter's after-school program is cancelled, your spouse or sitter needs to see the change of plans before school's out.

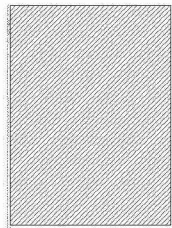
2 | COLOR CODING Besides providing info at a quick glance, color-coding your calendar will allow you to spend less time typing in events. "You won't need to enter Sam's Soccer Game, you'll just write Soccer Game (and assign it blue) because you know Sam's events are blue," says Watson.

3 | EASY ACCESS "Your digital calendar should work on all of your devices and be easily accessed from anywhere," says organizational expert Peter Walsh, of Los Angeles. Programs that offer mobile apps are ideal since they don't require you to log on to the Web.

4 | MULTIPLE USERS Moms often want a service that is designed for more than one person to have access to the calendar, says Ellen Faye, certified organizer coach, of Cherry Hill, New Jersey. When another adult or older kids can log in to view and edit events, it's no longer up to one person to oversee everything for everybody.

5 | SIMPLE SHARING Find a program that can e-mail friends or family a private, read-only link to a particular calendar or event rather than one that requires people to sign up. A URL that automatically updates info is also preferred: If it's clicked on days later, it will reflect any recent changes. Turn the page for some digital calendar options.

PETER ARDITO, STYLING BY LAURIE RAAB FOR HALLEY RESOURCES



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CHOOSE THE RIGHT CALENDAR

We tested a few popular online planners—so you don't have to!

	COZI (Free; cozi.com)	JIBIDEE (Free; jibidee.com)	PLUMLIFE (\$10 per month; plumlife.com)	HOMELIFE (Free; homelife .daytimer.com)
BASIC SET-UP	A calendar for each family member, plus one for the whole clan	A calendar for each category (can be a person or event type)	A calendar for each family member, plus additional "projects"	A calendar for each family member, plus additional categories
COLOR-CODING OPTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign each family member their own color Appears in all but month view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign each person or event type its own color Appears in all views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign each calendar its own color Appears in all views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign each person and event type its own color Appears in all views
DISPLAY OPTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day, week, and month views View all or just one family member's calendar at once 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Today, day, week, and month views View all or any mix of calendars at once 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Today, day, week, month, next 7 days, and next 4 weeks views View all or any mix of calendars at once 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day, week, month, and agenda view View all or any mix of calendars at once
REMINDER OPTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any family member can receive via text or e-mail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only account user can receive via e-mail and/or text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only account user can receive via e-mail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any family member can receive via e-mail, text, and/or pop-up
SYNCING OPTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sync with Outlook; edit in both directions Subscribe to any online calendar (i.e., your kid's school) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coming soon: Sync with Outlook or a native calendar, like iCal, on your smartphone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subscribe to iCal, Google, and Outlook calendars; edits stay in PlumLife only Export to another calendar; edits stay in that calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sync with Outlook; edit in both directions Import .csv or .ics calendar files or Google Calendar Subscribe to read-only iCal calendar
ACCESS OPTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> m.cozi.com for full mobile access Free smartphone and tablet app 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jibidee.com/mobile for view-only mobile access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> m.plumlife.com for full mobile access Coming soon: tablet and smartphone apps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelife.daytimer.com for full mobile access
SHARING OPTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-mail unique URLs for read-only, up-to-date info Share events or whole family calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coming soon: Invite people to sign up to view calendar(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-mail private URLs for read-only, up-to-date info Share events or whole calendars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite people to sign up to view calendar(s) Embed a specific calendar on a website or blog
BONUS FEATURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View on desktop as widget or screensaver (Windows users only) Color-code to-do and shopping lists Family journal feature keeps track of special moments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create up to 100 "sticky" notes and lists Personalize homepage design Send and receive paperless faxes (\$30 upgrade per year for 60 pages) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Search all events Color-code, set due dates, and send notifications for tasks Select/invite a sitter or driver via e-mail when adding events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tag events for easy sorting and searching Color-code and set reminders for to-dos Create a family blog and share photos Invite a driver when adding events
BEST FOR PARENTS WHO	prefer to organize one shared calendar by person, need to sync with Outlook, and want total mobile access	want an easy-to-use interface but are okay with a single-user platform and limited on-the-go access	don't mind paying a price for a single-user platform that has solid syncing, display, and access options	crave a well-designed, multi-user calendar that has lots of organization and syncing options

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STILL SCHEDULING-STUMPED?

Try these simple fixes for some common family calendar problems.

Q & A I like my digital calendar a lot, but it doesn't have a mobile app. Can I still access my schedule if I'm on the go?

Even if there isn't an app today there might very well be one soon, so it's important to stick with a system that you enjoy working with, says Jodie Watson. While you're waiting for your chosen digital calendar to catch up, log on to the website using your mobile browser and create a shortcut or bookmark it on your home screen. By doing this, you can simply click on the shortcut instead of manually entering the URL and logging in every time. Most digital calendars have full on-the-go editing capabilities and some of them even offer a read-only version that gives you access to your events and lists when you're offline or temporarily out of service.

Q If my daughter's piano lesson is cancelled in the middle of the day, how can I make sure my spouse and sitter get the memo?

A Many calendar programs can be set to automatically send users an alert when an event has been added, edited, or cancelled. This will save you tons of unnecessary phone calls or texts back and forth, says Watson. **Cozi** and **HomeLife** send alerts based on each family member's preference (which is chosen during the set-up process), but if you're using a calendar that isn't built for multiple users, like **PlumLife** or **Jibidee**, you cannot send an update from within the calendar.

Q What can I do to keep things like "buy Jessie's birthday gift" and "pick up dry cleaning" from cluttering my calendar?

A To-do lists and task managers are bonus features within calendar

services that have many of the same great organizational features as events, like reminders and color coding, but don't necessarily need to be assigned a specific day and time. You can keep track of one-time to-dos like "back-to-school shopping" and "bake for class party" on your to-do list and cross them off when they're complete. For more regular occurrences without time-specific due dates (think: house projects or bill payments) consider creating a calendar or a category for them within your program that you can turn on and off as desired.

Q How can I get my work calendar and my home calendar to talk to each other so I don't have to keep adding events twice?

A The good news is that many sites, like **Cozi** and **HomeLife**, are hard at work developing easier ways for digital calendars to communicate with one another. First, try to select a service that's compatible with your work calendar on some level. Many calendar programs allow you to sync with other calendars so that you can edit an event in one and the changes are reflected in the other, no matter where the event was first created. (**Cozi** and **HomeLife** do this with **Outlook**.) If that's not an option, subscribe to your work calendar within your home calendar and vice versa. This will essentially be a live feed of events that, depending on the program, are either view-only or can be edited and are continuously streamed into the calendar. Finally, some services have the ability to import work or outside calendars as well as export your home calendar. You'll need to repeat the steps frequently to ensure that the events you're viewing are accurate since it's a one-time thing, but it's definitely better than nothing! □

