



# **THE REAL-LIFE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING MEAL PLAN**

**A STEP-BY-STEP VISUAL TOOL FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS**

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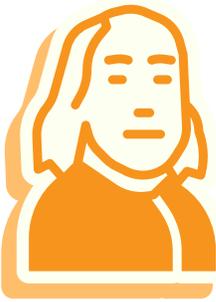


**PLAN**  
**IT OUT.**

Success in the kitchen  
starts with a plan.



Have you ever heard this famous quote attributed to Ben Franklin?



**"BY FAILING TO PREPARE, YOU ARE PREPARING TO FAIL."  
- BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**

Even though we're fairly confident that Franklin didn't spend much time cooking meals, his words of wisdom ring true for anyone learning to navigate the kitchen. The most successful cooks have learned that it all begins with a plan.

Not the plans you see in the front of most cookbooks, including long lists of "pantry supplies" you'll never use and cupboards full of "necessary tools" that will soon begin collecting dust. Let's just skip all that.

In this guide, you'll find just one strategy for meal planning that works if you shop every few days or shop once a month. It's an EF-friendly solution that works if you shop in person or prefer curbside pickup. **Four simple steps allow you to break down the EF barriers that create challenges for so many diverse learners.** It's a step-by-step EF-friendly grocery shopping guide.

#### **STEP ONE: START WITH YOUR CALENDAR.**

Did your heart rate go up when we said to start with a calendar? Does using a weekly planner make you cringe? No worries. We know that a lot of learners with EF challenges struggle with calendars and planning.

That's why we've created a visual tool to help with this step. **On the next few pages, you'll find a printable weekly planner template and shopping list that you can use each time you make a plan for your week.** Add as much or a little detail to it as you need to help you determine how you'll eat (and cook) for the week.

When you look at the weekly calendar, aim to answer these questions:

- How many meals do you need to shop for this week?
- What days will you be home and able to prep a meal?
- What days will you be at work, school, or on the go during meals?

We like to plan this step at the same time each week--Saturday mornings if we can-- spending 10-15 minutes visualizing what we need for the week.

Other tips: For most of us, this activity takes **a lot** of brain power. Plan a quiet, distraction-free environment to complete your weekly plan. **Then, ask a friend or family member to help with this step.** Sometimes talking out the events on the calendar is easier than trying to remember everything on your own.





# MY WEEKLY PLANNER

## BIG EVENTS THIS WEEK

Band concert - Thursday, 7 PM

Chemistry Exam - Wednesday

Dad's Birthday - Saturday

Dinner at Grandma's

## WHAT I NEED TO SUCCEED:

1

Extra time to study for the Chem exam on Monday & Tuesday

2

Meals prepped for the week through Wednesday - no cooking time before then

3

Time to shop for Dad's birthday card and gift before the party

MONDAY

Early Chem Study - 7- 8AM

School - 8-2 PM

Chem Study Session - 2-4 PM

Tennis Lesson 4-5 PM

Homework 5-9 PM

TUESDAY

Early Chem Study - 7-8 AM

School - 8-2 PM

Chem Study Session - 2-4 PM

Homework 4-9 PM

WEDNESDAY

Make Breakfast before Exam to calm nerves

School - 8-2 PM - CHEMISTRY EXAM

Tennis Practice - 4-5 PM

Shopping for Dad's gift at the Mall - 7-10 PM

THURSDAY

School - 8-2 PM

Make Dinner

Band Concert - 7 PM

FRIDAY

School - 8-2 PM

Tennis Practice - 4-5 PM

Dinner at Grandmas - 6:30 PM

SATURDAY/SUNDAY

Saturday AM - No plans or Shop for Dad's gift if I haven't finished it.

Saturday PM - Dad's Birthday Party

Sunday 8-10 AM - Homework

10-11:00 AM - Meal Planning for Next Week

11:00-1:00 PM - Grocery Shopping & Meal Prep

## STEP TWO: BRAINSTORM MEALS.

Once you have a general idea about the calendar, the next step we like to suggest is to spend a few minutes brainstorming about what cooking might look like this week. Spend a few minutes jotting notes down to questions like:

- **What favorite foods do I want to have?**
- **What do I have ingredients for already?**
- **What am I hungry for?**
- **What meals have I not eaten for a while?**
- **What new meals would I like to try?**

Cooking is not just about eating. It's about finding enjoyment and increasing positive thinking about how you prepare food. By taking a few minutes to build in things you know will make meals better this week, you're setting the stage for success.

If you struggle with the executive functioning skills of flexibility and problem-solving, give this step a try, but don't spend too much time on it. **Set a timer for 5 minutes and use whatever notes you have down at that time to move on with the next step.** Any more than that and you're likely adding unnecessary frustration.

## STEP THREE: CREATE THE MENU PLAN.

Using your brainstorming notes and your weekly calendar, the next step is to create a basic meal plan for the week. Using a visual chart, sketch out the weekly meals. First **list out any meals you know you'll be eating on the go and not cooking for.**

On dates where you plan to cook meals, list out which meals you plan to cook. Don't worry about filling in every slot, it's okay to leave some spaces open for 'leftovers' or 'take out.'

If you struggle with the executive functioning skill of time management, double check that as you complete each day, that you have enough time in your weekly calendar for cooking and meal prep. if you need help with the budgeting step, ask a friend or family member if they think the menu plan is a realistic one.



# WEEKLY MEAL PLANNER

## BRAINSTORMING

Write down as many meal ideas as you can think of prior to menu planning.

Ask:

- What do I have ingredients for already?
- What am I hungry for?
- What meals have I not eaten for a while?
- What new foods would I like to try?

*Ingredients I have:*

*bread and peanut butter*

*blueberries*

*cheese*

*Hungry For:*

*Something easy - in the slow  
cooker?*

*Sandwiches*

*It's been a while since I've had:  
bacon*

*New Foods: Not this week.*



## NARROW IT DOWN

Of my brainstorming options, what 3 recipes/ideas sound the best?

*PB & J Tacos*

*Slow Cooker Chicken*

*Eggs & Bacon*



## DOUBLE CHECK

Using the weekly calendar, do you have time for each recipe? Do you have the EF brain power for each recipe this week?

- ✓ *PB & J Tacos*
- ✓ *Slow Cooker Chicken*
- ✓ *Scrambled Eggs & Bacon*



## CREATE A SHOPPING LIST

# WEEKLY MEAL PLANNER

	<b>BREAKFAST</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>DINNER</b>
<b>MONDAY</b>	<i>Grab &amp; Go Breakfast: Granola Bar &amp; Protein Shake</i>	<i>Lunch at School</i>	<i>Pre-Prep Meal: Slow Cooker Chicken</i>
<b>TUESDAY</b>	<i>Grab &amp; Go Breakfast: Granola Bar &amp; Protein Shake</i>	<i>Lunch at School</i>	<i>Easy Meal: P B &amp; J Tacos</i>
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<i>Home Breakfast: Scrambled Eggs &amp; Bacon</i>	<i>Lunch at School</i>	<i>Dinner at the Mall</i>
<b>THURSDAY</b>	<i>Breakfast At School</i>	<i>Lunch at School</i>	<i>7 PM - Eat at the Band Concert</i>
<b>FRIDAY</b>	<i>Breakfast At School</i>	<i>Lunch at School</i>	<i>Dinner at Grandma's</i>
<b>SATURDAY</b>	<i>Home Breakfast: 3 ingredient pancakes</i>	<i>Dad's Birthday Party</i>	
<b>SUNDAY:</b>	<i>Next week's meal planning &amp; grocery shopping</i>		

#### STEP FOUR: CHECK INGREDIENTS.

Once you have your weekly menu plan, the next step is to **check that you have all the ingredients you need to make your meals for the week.**

Read through the menu plan meal by meal and confirm that you have the ingredients required to make them. If you don't have an ingredient, add it to the grocery list.

EF tip: **We add grocery items to the list with the quantity we need for the recipe.** That way you always make sure you purchase only what you need and don't have to make a special trip back for more.

Finally, **check your basics list.** The basics list includes pantry staples like spices, flour, and common recipe ingredients like milk, cheese, and bread that can be combined into simple meals. The basics list should always be permanent on your list and something you check on each time you shop. **Include other home items** (laundry detergent, dish soap, etc.) that you may pick up at the grocery store as well.

#### STEP FIVE: SHOP.

Just like cooking, grocery shopping requires a lot of different EF skills. Organization, working memory, problem-solving, attentional control, and self-monitoring are some of the many different skills it takes to have a productive trip at the grocery store.

That's why it helps to go in having a grocery list to shop from. **Take the paper list and a pencil or your smartphone so you can check off the items as you put them in the cart.** Write all of your ingredients in order by the section of the grocery store. Double-check before you head to the cashier that you put all the items on your list in the cart.

If you find grocery shopping is too much, don't let it get in the way of enjoying cooking. Now more than ever, it's easy to use online shopping and grocery delivery apps. These can make the process of shopping less overwhelming and allow you to separate shopping and cooking.

So you can spend more time doing what you enjoy.



# WEEKLY MEAL PLANNER

## GROCERY SHOPPING LIST

Check your BASIC Ingredients list. Cross off any that you don't need to shop for this week.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <del>Salt</del>         | <input type="checkbox"/> Bananas                                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <del>Black Pepper</del> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <del>Flour Tortillas</del>       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All purpose flour                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Canned Black Beans                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Butter                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen Chicken Tenders                      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <del>Olive Oil</del>    | <input type="checkbox"/> Shredded Cheddar Cheese                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eggs                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <del>Microwave Rice Packet</del> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bread                              | <input type="checkbox"/>   |

Add additional ingredients from your weekly meal plan.

## FRUITS & VEGETABLES

- |                                       |                          |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apples       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cucumber (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avocado (2)  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## MEAT/SEAFOOD

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bacon (1 pound)    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chicken Breast (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## BAKING / SPICES

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cumin ( 2 Tbsp)    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taco Seasoning (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## CONDIMENTS/SAUCES

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Raspberry Jam  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ranch Dressing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## CANNED / DRIED FOODS

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Granola Bars (12)      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chicken Broth (2 cans) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## FROZEN FOODS

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## BEVERAGES

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mocha Powder Mix | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whey Powder Mix  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## HOUSEHOLD & TOILETRIES

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toothpaste       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canned Cat Food  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paper Towels     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cough Drops      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic Zip Bags | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# TEMPLATES

Print your own and fully customize your meal  
planning experience





# WEEKLY MEAL PLANNER

## BRAINSTORMING

Write down as many meal ideas as you can think of prior to menu planning.

Ask:

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- What am I hungry for?
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- What new foods would I like to try?



## NARROW IT DOWN

Of my brainstorming options, what 3 recipes/ideas sound the best?



## DOUBLE CHECK

Using the weekly calendar, do you have time for each recipe? Do you have the EF brain power for each recipe this week?



## CREATE A SHOPPING LIST



# WEEKLY MEAL PLANNER

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			

**SUNDAY:**

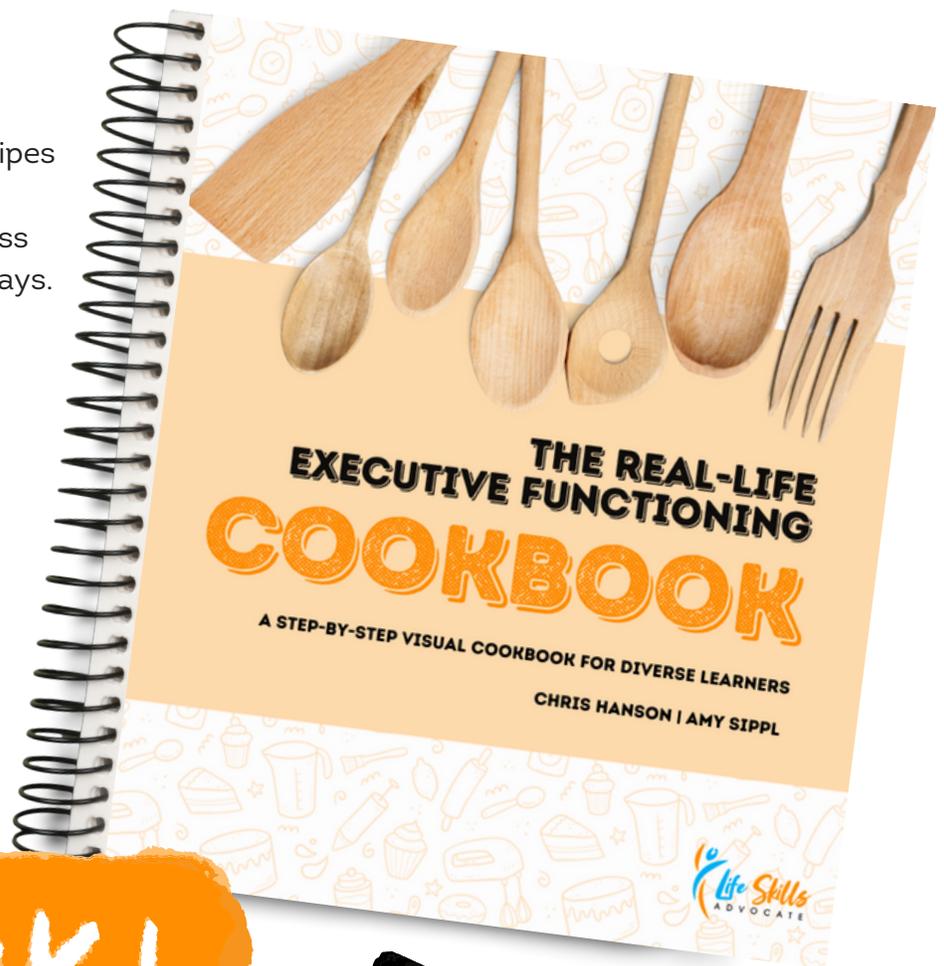


# WANT MORE EF-FRIENDLY COOKING IDEAS?

This meal planner is an excerpt from our recently published cookbook "**The Real-Life Executive Functioning Cookbook.**" It's a step-by-step digital cookbook with visuals designed for diverse learners.

Inside you'll find:

- EF-friendly cooking strategies.
- More meal planning tips.
- 20+ easy-to-follow, healthy recipes with step-by-step visuals.
- Recipes with 3 ingredients or less
- No-cook recipes for tricky EF days.
- Tips for parents and teachers working on cooking skills with diverse learners.



**LOOK!**

