

Launch and Land

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by Christine Vick, Ideas by Marie Ricks



A Successful Launch:

The hardest part of getting out the door is remembering what you and your family members must take along. A last minute scramble for library books or Sally's science fair project creates lots of stress (and often makes you late).

"The solution," says professional organizer Marie Ricks, "is to create a launching pad." It's a physical space at least three feet long near the door where you exit or enter your home. Install a shelf, use a small table top, or clear out area in your closet, but try to make the space waist high, so items are visible.

Each evening, check your calendar, gather all the items you need for the next day's activities, and place them on your launching pad. Include your purse, keys and planner. If you're driving kids to school or dropping off a spouse at work, have them put their belongings on the pad as well.

The next morning, you may still be rushing out the door, but what you need for the day will be prepared and easily accessible.



Additional Launch Tips:

- Launch directly into your car. Purchase (or repurpose) a flat bottomed basket--it should be large enough to hold multiple items but still fit comfortably in the passenger or back seat. Keep the basket on your launching pad. Each evening, fill it according to the directions above and put it into the car (so you won't even have to think about it the next morning). Avoid putting it in the trunk; keeping it visible reminds you of what is on your schedule.
- If you're returning items to a store, use scotch tape to attach the receipt to the item before you put it on the launch pad.
- Make a list. If you have multiple errands to run, place a to-do list with your other items. "Our minds are for problem solving," says Ricks, "and paper is for remembering." Having a list handy while you're driving around makes it less likely that you'll forget an important to-do.

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A Smooth Landing:

When you and your family members come crashing in from school, an outing or just a long day, it's tempting to leave coats, bags, and purchases on the floor. This (as you might know) leads to chaos and the mess takes longer put away later. "Most people can launch into an activity," says Ricks, "but they forget to land; they drop everything and start launching again." Instead, plan an extra 10-15 minutes to finish the activities you started. If you go to the store, put purchases away. If you're home from the gym, put your bag in the closet and water bottle in the dishwasher. Teach your kids to hang up their coats and put away their shoes. Having the discipline to put an item in its place as you walk in the door will add an element of order to your home.

Learning to launch and land correctly takes a little effort initially, but it pays off very quickly. "Your life will be more pulled together," says Ricks, "You'll be able to find what you're looking for, your possessions will have a home, and you'll remember what you need." Roger that, Houston.

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