

Backwards Planning

Backward planning is a simple process for managing the details of an event.

- Make a list of all the tasks which need to be completed before the program begins.
- Include publicity and advertising, space reservation, travel arrangements, accommodations, and anything else that will need to happen.
- Using a calendar, start with the last task on your list to be completed before the program.
- Write it on your planning calendar on the appropriate date, and then consider its components.
- If there are component tasks which need to be completed beforehand (i.e., before publicity can be hung up, it needs to be designed and copied), work backward with them and plug them in the calendar.
- Then proceed to the next to the last task, and so on.

Here's How It Works:

Let's assume that your event is on October 1. Look through the list of tasks which need to be completed between now (August 1, for example) and then. Perhaps you decide that you will:

- Have volunteers committed by September 26
- Order hospitality/food items by September 20
- Create informational materials to distribute by September 20 (this will allow for a rough draft and a final draft)
- Circulate publicity by September 17
- Design publicity and make copies by September 10
- Reserve a space to hold your event by September 3 (earlier depending on the size of event and availability of space requesting)
- Order favors and supplies to distribute/use by September 1
- Decide what you're going to do: Pick topic, activities, etc. by August 25

You can then go back to your list and your calendar and repeat the process with the next task.

Working backward before you ever start to go forward allows you to get a glimpse of the big picture of everything that needs to happen to get your event off the ground. You are less likely to overlook an important component, avoid realizing that you have eight major tasks to complete before tomorrow, and are sure to start preliminary work in time to meet deadlines. By this process of carefully breaking events down into manageable pieces and pre-planning to accommodate them, you have a better chance for a smooth process which allows time to complete tasks efficiently and effectively.

