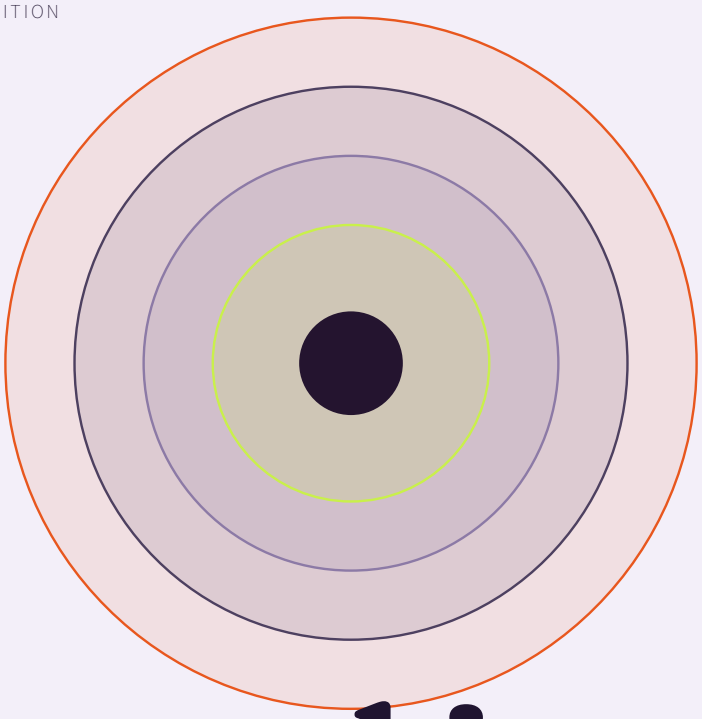


Homemaking with Babs: Tips and Tricks for Making a House a Home

A reading of the book by Barbara Costello (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Homemaking with Babs: Tips and Tricks for Making a House a Home, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Barbara Costello is Babs of Brunch with Babs, a former preschool teacher who became known for the recipes and household tips she began posting online with her youngest daughter. This book, from Clarkson Potter, is a practical guide to setting up, cleaning, organizing and keeping up a home, whether you rent or own. Its argument is that homemaking is about how a home makes the people in it feel, and that a happy home matters more than a perfect one. The backbone is her short daily routine, Clean in 15: fifteen minutes in the morning and fifteen at night, with daily, weekly and monthly reminders on top. Around it sit seasonal cleaning and organizing checklists, home maintenance and saving for repairs, natural cleaning recipes and simmer pots, and ways to get the whole household involved. It draws on her decades of running a family home, with photos of her husband and grandchildren pitching in.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Homemaking is about how a house makes people feel; keeping it clean is only one part of that.

Babs separates homemaking from housekeeping. Housekeeping is the tidying and scrubbing. Homemaking is the larger aim of a place where the people who live there feel cared for, and the chores serve that aim rather than the other way round.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Fifteen minutes in the morning and fifteen at night beat a weekend cleaning marathon.

Her Clean in 15 routine, which she also calls the Babs Method, splits upkeep into two short sessions a day. Steady small habits keep the house from sliding, so the big catch-up days stop being needed.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

If you only have time for one thing, do the dishes, so the sink never becomes a catch-all.

Her rhythm is to load the dishwasher from the sink at night and empty it in the morning. An empty dishwasher means the day's dishes have somewhere to go, and a clear sink keeps the kitchen from piling up. She pairs it with an easy morning win, making the bed.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Trying to overhaul the whole house at once is the fastest way back to your old habits.

Babs warns that a big burst of effort tends to end in burnout. Start small, keep it going, and let consistency do the work that one heroic weekend cannot.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Sort before you put away, and finish one room before you start the next.

When she launched the book, Babs described decluttering with five labelled bins: trash, recycle, donate, relocate and resell. Things that belong elsewhere go in the relocate bin instead of drifting room to room, and the trash and donations leave the house the same day.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A home runs better when everyone who lives in it has a job.

Kids, partners and roommates all get a share, which Babs sees as a source of pride and belonging, not only a way to split the work. She suggests a chore chart and starting children with a few tasks, and has older children teach younger ones.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Aim for a happy home, not a perfect one.

Comparing your rooms with homes on the internet or in magazines sets you up to fall short. Every household is different, and the right choices are the ones that suit the people living in yours.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Small chunks work because everyone can find fifteen minutes.

Babs was a teacher and started her own preschool before she was known online, and the habit of breaking work into short pieces suits that background. She has said she once kept a detailed index-card system for chores and dropped it when it became overwhelming.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Plan for repairs before the house asks for them.

Beyond daily cleaning, the book covers home maintenance: seasonal checklists room by room, planning for repairs and setting money aside in a maintenance fund. Upkeep you expect is a job on the calendar instead of a crisis.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Write your two 15-minute lists
- [ ] Run a five-bin sort on one room
- [ ] Give everyone at home one or two jobs
- [ ] Open a home repair fund
- [ ] Put the seasons on your calendar

KEEP UP DAILY

- [ ] Make the bed first thing
- [ ] Load at night, unload in the morning
- [ ] Start the laundry before bed

30 days · Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Write your two 15-minute lists

Pick the few tasks that would make the biggest difference each morning and each evening, and keep each list to about 15 minutes.

Use the planner on this page and stick the card where you will see it.

MY VERSION DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Run a five-bin sort on one room

Label five bins or bags: trash, recycle, donate, relocate, resell.

Choose one room, sort it completely, and finish it before you touch another. Take the trash out and put the donations in the car that day.

MY VERSION DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Give everyone at home one or two jobs

Make a simple chore chart with a name on every task.

Start each person, children included, with one or two jobs they can do on their own, and add more once those stick.

MY VERSION DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Open a home repair fund

HourLife's tip: open a separate savings pot just for the house and set up a small automatic transfer on pay-day.

Write down the repairs you already know are coming so the fund has a purpose.

MY VERSION DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Put the seasons on your calendar

HourLife's tip: add a reminder at the start of each season to walk through every room with a checklist.

Note what needs a deep clean, a fix or a sort, and spread it over the following weeks.

MY VERSION DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Make the bed first thing

Start each morning with the five-minute win of a made bed.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6 ○
7 ○	8 ○	9 ○	10 ○	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Load at night, unload in the morning

Before bed, move everything from the sink into the dishwasher and run it.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Start the laundry before bed

If your washer has a delay timer, load it at night so it finishes by morning.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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December 2026

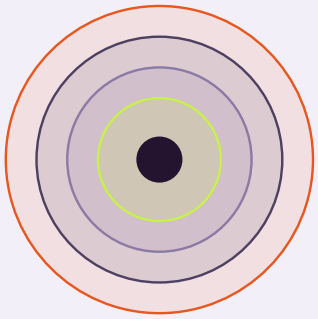
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Fifteen minutes at each end of the day, shared by everyone, is how a house starts to feel like home.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER BARBARA COSTELLO