

Backward Planning

The backward planning process is simple. Make a list of all the tasks that need to be completed before the program begins; including publicity, advertising, space reservations, travel arrangements, accommodations, and all other tasks, which will need to be accomplished. Using a calendar, start with the last task on your list to be completed prior to the program. Write your tasks on your planning calendar on the appropriate date, and then consider its components. If there are component tasks, which need to be completed, work backward with them and plug them into the calendar. Then proceed with the next to last task to be completed, and so on.

For example, assume that your program begins on October 1. As you look through the list of 25 tasks, which need to be completed between now (August 1) and then, you decide to have the first task, visitor's schedules, completed and turned in by September 29. You then realize that the schedules need to be typed up by September 28, and you mark this down. Perhaps next you decide that you will have volunteers committed by September 26, travel schedules by September 23, contracted activities firmed up by September 16, confirmation letters or calls concerning activities and accommodations by September 9, and contracts completed by September 2. You will then go back to your list and calendar, and go through the same process with the next tasks. *An example is as follows:*

September	1	2 Contracts completed	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 Confirmation established	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 Activities confirmed	17	18	19	20
21	22	23 Travel schedules due	24	25	26 Volunteers committed	27
28 Schedules typed by today	29 Visitors schedules completed	30	October 1 Program begins!			

By working backward before you ever start to go forward, you run less chance of overlooking important components, realizing that you have eight major tasks to complete by tomorrow, or not starting preliminary work in time to meet deadlines. By this process of careful pre-planning, you have a better chance for a smooth process, which allows time to complete tasks efficiently and affectively.

