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◆ Essential tips for time-crunched women, from Linda Gray



me time

GET PEOPLE TO AGREE WITH YOU

To sway opinions quickly, be polite but powerful, says Barbara Pachter, author of *The Power Of Positive Confrontation*. If people take what you say the wrong way, your tone of voice may be at odds with your words, so listen to your voicemail to hear how you sound. If you often say things like 'just do it now' or 'I'm so sorry to bother you,' you could be coming across as too aggressive or too submissive, so rethink your approach.

Time saved 40 mins



Slow food the quick way

Fast forward a roast

There are times when I crave a pot roast more than chocolate, usually about 15 minutes before lunch. Now a whole range of fast cookers are jostling for space in your kitchen, promising good food in less time. Halogen ovens roast beautifully but shave only a few minutes off the usual time, says the GHI team. Pressure cookers give quicker results. Tefal's Wikook (£100) whizzes up a chicken casserole in 20 mins, while its Multicook (also around £100) delivers a pot roast in 25 mins and soup in six. That said, I still hanker after the slow-cooked flavour, so next weekend I'll prepare some shin of beef, set the oven timer and hit the shops. Then back home to hotpot!

Time saved 2 hrs 30 mins

HURRAH! NAIL POLISH THAT LASTS

There's nothing more time wasting than having to revarnish chipped nails. So give yourself a treat with a manicure that lasts three weeks rather than three days. 'For me, Revlon Nail Enamel (£6.49 at Boots) wins hands down!' says GH beauty director Suzanne Duckett. It's chip resistant and longer lasting than polish. Apply two coats over a base coat, sweeping the brush over the tip of the nail, then top with OPI's RapiDry (£13 at Boots). Renew the top coat every few days and nails should stay super-shiny till next month.

Time saved 45 mins



Clever clogs: keep your shoes together

FIND THE OTHER SHOE

To save scrabbling for the missing one, help yourself to free supermarket wine carriers – each holds three pairs. If you don't want to sully your bedroom with branding, a fiver buys 12 white ones from www.cardboardboxes.co.uk (click on 'retail packaging').

Time saved 5 mins

Speed up your PC

Switch on, log in, wait, give up, make coffee. According to PC Tools, we waste up to a day a year doing just that. Speed up your machine by storing large files and space-hungry images online (I use www.dropbox.com), cleaning up the hard drive (on a PC, go to Help and search for Disk Cleanup) and deleting programs you never use. Then update your security, in case a virus is paralysing the system. And if the problem's sluggish broadband, consider swapping to cable.

Time saved 30 mins



Now you'll have time for tea

Total time saved 4 hrs 30 mins

Hat and gloves on – you've made plenty of time for afternoon tea. The adventurous can try exploding lollipops and multicoloured sandwiches at the Sanderson Hotel's Mad Hatter's tea party in London. Or, for a more traditional experience, head to the award-winning Manor Hotel in Castle Combe, Wiltshire, or the Black Swan Tearoom in Helmsley, Yorkshire.