Microsoft Excel is more flexible and useful than most people realize. Although Excel is a popular spreadsheet program used primarily for managing data within businesses, it also has a large capacity for practical, everyday use. The strength of Excel lies in its ability to quickly sort through, manage and organize data. There are many ways in which an average computer user could also employ Excel to help manage everyday tasks in her own life.

1. **Manage your finances with Excel.** Create a personal or family budget and track your income and expenses by month or year. Create a spreadsheet that helps you plan and track your savings for retirement, or for your child's college education. Use Excel's built-in mathematical functions to automatically calculate routine or complex equations.
2. **Create a calendar or schedule with Excel**. Whether it's a weekly, monthly or yearly calendar for your family; a personal daily appointment planner; or a schedule for managing homework, bill payments, or your favorite sport team's games, Excel makes it easy to organize, filter and search through large amounts of data.
3. **Plan and manage a project or event with Excel.** Whether you are planning a large work project or a wedding or holiday party, use Excel to keep track of multiple tasks and deadlines, and the schedules of other participants or collaborators--and as a central database of all information and files you need to execute the project or event.
4. **Create lists through Excel.** Excel's convenient tabular layout makes it easy to format many different types of lists. Create checklists to make traveling and packing easier. Create an emergency phone list for your babysitter. Manage your book, wine or DVD collections via lists. Run your household better by using Excel lists to manage your groceries, chores and holiday gift-giving.
5. **Create an address book to manage your mailing labels**. Excel's extensive "filter," "sort" and "search" functions make it easy to create and manage a large contact database. You will be able to find and sort contacts by city, state, street, last name or birthday, or by whatever other criteria and detail you enter. When you need to create mailing labels to send greeting cards or announcements, use Excel's mail-merge feature to quickly format and print out the names and addresses of your contacts.

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1. **Keep Score** - Any time you have a game that lasts more than one night (my husband and I have had some epically long Boggle competitions), Excel is exactly the right tool to keep track of results -- not only does the spreadsheet format easily keep numbers where they belong, but when the game finally ends, you can print off a line graph showing your progress toward victory mapped right over your partner's progress toward final defeat!
2. **Tracking Collections** -I'm a big fan of collectables, whether it's a geeky collectable card game or a more serious philatelic pursuit. Excel provides you with the ability to list not only quantities of various elements, but qualities as well -- and it makes the task of sorting by quality as easy as "Sort By 'Mint/New/Used'."
3. **Scheduling** - Excel spreadsheets make great schedulers. For example: scheduling your kids' chores, color-coding so that they have no excuse for not knowing what their duties are, and actually printing off the sheets and putting them on the fridge with a marker nearby for easy check-off. Excel makes it easy.
4. **Purchasing Decisions** - When you've got options like trying to decide where to purchase vitamins (in which each store sells different quantities of pills for different prices and in varying concentrations), you basically MUST have Excel in order to make the most well-informed purchasing decision. There's little other way to sort that much data.
5. **Food Journals** - When you're on a diet, whether you're tracking calories, carbs, or grams of fat, being able to put the data into a consistent, organized place is key. Excel offers you that place as well as tools to easily sum up your daily totals and chart your progress over time.

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This is just a small sample of what can be done with this powerful program. Don’t be afraid to explore and try different things. The best way to learn a new program is to get your hands into it and you will be amazed with what you can do.