The good wife’s guide

- Have dinner ready. Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal ready, on time for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospect of a good meal (especially his favorite dish) is part of the warm welcome needed.

- Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people.

- Be a little gay and a little more interesting for him. His boring day may need a lift and one of your duties is to provide it.

- Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives.

- Gather up schoolbooks, toys, paper etc and then run a dustcloth over the tables.

- Over the cooler months of the year you should prepare and light a fire for him to unwind by. Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift too. After all, catering for his comfort will provide you with immense personal satisfaction.

- Prepare the children. Take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and faces (if they are small), comb their hair and, if necessary, change their clothes. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part. Minimise all noise. At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet.

- Be happy to see him.

- Greet him with a warm smile and show sincerity in your desire to please him.

- Listen to him. You may have a dozen important things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first — remember, his topics of conversation are more important than yours.

- Make the evening his. Never complain if he comes home late or goes out to dinner, or other places of entertainment without you. Instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure and his very real need to be at home and relax.

- Your goal: Try to make sure your home is a place of peace, order and tranquillity where your husband can renew himself in body and spirit.

- Don’t greet him with complaints and problems.

- Don’t complain if he’s late home for dinner or even if he stays out all night. Count this as minor compared to what he might have gone through that day.

- Make him comfortable. Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or have him lie down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him.

- Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, soothing and pleasant voice.

- Don’t ask him questions about his actions or question his judgment or integrity. Remember, he is the master of the house and as such will always exercise his will with fairness and truthfulness. You have no right to question him.

A good wife always knows her place.

The daily pattern of household life is governed by the husband’s commuting schedule. It is entirely a woman's day because virtually every male commutes. Usually the men must leave between 7:00 and 8:00 A.M.; therefore they rise between 6:00 and 7:00 A.M. In most cases the wife rises with her husband, makes his breakfast while he shaves, and has a cup of coffee with him. Then she often returns to bed until the children get up. The husband is not likely to be back before 7:00 or 7:30 P.M.

This leaves the woman alone all day to cope with the needs of the children, her house-keeping, and shopping. (Servants, needless to say, are unknown). When the husband returns, he is generally tired, both from his work and his traveling. . . . Often by the time the husband returns the children are ready for bed. Then he and his wife eat their supper and wash the dishes. By 10:00 P.M. most lights are out.

For the women this is a long, monotonous (boring) daily routine. Generally the men, once home, do not want to leave. They want to "relax" or "improve the property" -putter around the lawn or shrubbery. However, the women want a "change." Thus, groups of women often go to the movies together.

Document B: *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan (Modified)

The problem . . . was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, . . . lay beside her husband at night--she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question--"Is this all?" . . .

In the fifteen years after World War II, this mystique of feminine fulfillment became the cherished . . . core of contemporary American culture. Millions of women lived their lives in the image of those pretty pictures of the American suburban housewife, kissing their husbands goodbye in front of the picture window, depositing their station-wagons full of children at school, and smiling as they ran the new electric waxer over the spotless kitchen floor. They baked their own bread, sewed their own and their children's clothes, kept their new washing machines and dryers running all day. . . . Their only dream was to be perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands. They had no thought for the unfeminine problems of the world outside the home; they wanted the men to make the major decisions. . .

*Source: Betty Friedan was one of the early leaders of the Women’s Rights movement that developed in the 1960s and 1970s. She published The Feminine Mystique in 1963. In the book, Friedan discusses how stifled and unsatisfied many suburban women were in the 1950s.*
The Woman’s Home Companion (a popular women’s magazine) conducted opinion polls in 1947 and 1949 in which readers named the women they most admired. In both years the top four women were [women involved in politics].

The postwar popular magazines were also positive about women’s participation in politics. The Ladies’ Home Journal had numerous articles that supported women as political and community leaders. One article in the Ladies’ Home Journal from 1947 encouraged women to “Make politics your business. Voting, office holding, raising your voice for new and better laws are just as important to your home and your family as the evening meal or spring house cleaning.”

[This shows that women at the time believed that individual achievement and public service were at least as important as devotion to home and family].

Document D: Historian Alice Kessler-Harris (Modified)

At first glance, the 1950s was a decade of the family... But already the family was flashing warning signals. . . . Homes and cars, refrigerators and washing machines, telephones and multiple televisions required higher incomes . . . The two-income family emerged. In 1950, wives earned wages in only 21.6 percent of all families. By 1960, 30.5 percent of wives worked for wages. And that figure would continue to increase. Full- and part-time working wives contributed about 26 percent of the total family income.

# Women in the 1950s Graphic Organizer

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<th>Source: Author Date</th>
<th>What were suburban women doing? (Provide evidence to support your answer)</th>
<th>How did they feel? (Provide evidence to support your answer)</th>
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Hypothesis One: Is the image of the happy 1950s housewife accurate? Why or why not?
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**Final Claim:** Is the image of the happy 1950s housewife accurate? Why or why not? Use 2-4 pieces of evidence to support your claim.