Using Routines

Routines are things we do every day; routines are like instructions. Routines keep children on task. Children do well in well-ordered and predictable environments. Routines build important social studies skills:

- **Responsibility** – Routines, like brushing teeth every night before bed, help children learn to care for themselves, their belongings, and the home.

- **Awareness Time** – Routines, such as packing a school backpack every morning after breakfast, help children understand what comes next in the day.

- **Social & Communication Skills** – Routines, like picking up toys every day between lunch and nap time, help children learn to communicate with, care for, and get along with others.

**Tips for parents.** When setting up routines, remember to:

- **Be Consistent:** Establish a routine and follow it; no matter who is caring for your child, the routine should be the same.
- **Give choices.** Let children make some of their own decisions.
- **Use Simple Steps.** Break down the routine into simple steps. State each step at a time with positive and clearly stated directions.
- **Be Realistic.** Your child cannot do everything that an adult can do. Make sure that routines are appropriate for your child’s age and skills.
- **Practice** – Do the routine over and over . . . practice makes perfect!
- **Give Guidance.** Show your child how to do each step. Remind children what to do. Do not scold or yell when your child is learning a routine.
- **Remain Flexible.** Don’t let the daily schedule be a rigid time clock. Keep the order of the routine (the sequence) the same, but be flexible with how long activities happen.
- **Celebrate success.**

**Parents can help.** You can:

- **Set a schedule for your child.** Have regular times for eating, bathing, and going to bed. This will help your baby know what to expect and when to expect it.
- **Hang a “picture chart” of each routine where your child can see it.** This will help your child learn the steps and follow established routines. For example, a “morning wake-up” routine chart could include: getting dressed, making the bed, and brushing teeth. Or, a “bedtime routine” could be: bathing, brushing teeth, putting on PJs, reading a story, singing a song, and saying good night.

**Book Suggestions**

- *A Busy Day at the Farm* by Doreen Cronin and Betsy Lewin
- *Night Night Fuzzy* by Harriet Ziefert and Elliot Kreloff

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