



Establishing Routines

Children thrive on routines – something done the same way every time or at the same time of day. Routines build important self-help and life skills. They give children the opportunity to learn to care for themselves, their belongings, and their environment. Routines help children move from being a toddler, when everything is done for them, to being an independent preschooler.

INFANT:

- Establish 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.
- Start a bedtime routine. For example, bathe, brush teeth, put on PJs, read a story, place in crib, sing a song, and say good night.

TODDLER:

- Help your child understand routines by breaking it down into simple steps. Show your child how to do each step of the routine, and then have her try it on her own. Use first/then phrases: “First we wash our hands, and then we eat a snack.”
- Be consistent. Even when your child is with a babysitter or a grandparent, the routine should be the same. For example, meals should be at the same time each day; bedtime should be at the same time every night.

PRESCHOOLERS:

- Set up routines that help your child practice self-care and home/life skills. For instance, have your child help you make the bed in the morning, clear the table after dinner, or pick up toys before bed.
- For more complicated routines, consider using “picture charts” that show all the steps. For instance, a “morning wake-up” routine chart could include: getting dressed, making the bed, and brushing teeth. Hang the chart somewhere that your child can see it. This will help him remember all the steps.
- Be realistic. Your child cannot do everything that an adult can do. Make sure that routines are appropriate for your child’s age.

Book Suggestion

Ten, Nine, Eight. Molly Bang. Tupelo Books, 1983.

Bunny Day: Telling Time from Breakfast to Bedtime. Rick Walton. Harper Collins, 2002.