

Routines to manage behaviour (1-6 years)

Using routines to manage your child's behaviour

Routines help family members know who should do what, when, in what order and how often. You can use routines to help with behaviour management.

Why are routines important?

Routines can help reduce inappropriate behaviour about boring things such as cleaning teeth, tidying up after play, or switching the TV off. A routine can also help you plan ahead for the times when your child is likely to misbehave, like when you are shopping, driving or visiting.

You can also build routines for your young child around play, meals and sleep. If your young child has had enough good-quality sleep, nutritious food and plenty of play, she is more likely to behave the way you want. And routines also help her feel safe and secure, which is what she needs to grow and learn.

Tips to help your child with routines

Here are some ideas to introduce some routines into your family:

- If your child is old enough, talk about routines with her. By the time she starts school, discussions about routines can be a great way of helping her learn important things like how to organise herself and how to be ready on time.
- Plan routines for particularly demanding times in the family day – for example, before and after work and school. Routines that give everybody something to do – or at least keep your child busy while you get things done – can help things run more smoothly.
- Add some downtime into your child's routine. This gives your child time for a sleep or rest, which can help with behaviour. It also gives her time to learn to entertain herself.
- If you want to put time limits on some activities, such as screen time, you can make this part of the routine. For example, your child can watch TV or use her tablet, but only between 5 and 5.30 pm (or whatever suits your family).
- Put up an illustrated poster of your routine somewhere everyone can see it. Making the poster with your child could be fun and give you the chance to talk about the routine.
- Involve your child in parts of the routine that she can manage by herself – for example, washing her hands before eating.
- Find ways to remind your child to follow the routine without your help. For example, put a radio alarm clock in your child's room. The music can be a signal that it is time to wake up, time to start getting ready for school, or time to come out of the bedroom in the morning.

- Think about whether parts of the routine can be your child's responsibility. Your child can learn new skills and help the family by doing household chores – for example, a preschooler could set the table.
- Notice when your child follows the routine without help, and then praise her.



Recommended Reads

- [Jo Frost's confident toddler care](#)
- [Managing your toddler's behaviour](#)
- [Parenting](#)