

Routines

What are routines?

Routines are how families organise themselves so they can get things done, spend time together and have fun.

Why are routines important?

Routines benefit your child in many ways. For example, routines:

- help your child feel safer and more secure because her home life is predictable.
- help set your child's body clocks – for example, bedtime routines help your child's body to 'know' when it is time to sleep.
- are a good way of teaching your child ways to stay healthy, like time to brush teeth or exercise, and to wash hands after using the toilet.
- help you remember important things – for example, if your child needs to take medicine regularly, putting this in your routine will make it more likely that you and your child will not forget.
- make it easier for your child to deal with the stress of events such as the birth of a new child, parents separating, or the illness of a family member.

Routines have benefits for you too.

- When things are busy and hectic, routines can help you feel more organised and more in control, which will make you feel less stressed.
- A routine will help you complete regular daily tasks efficiently.
- Routines will help you schedule time out for yourself.
- Routines take effort, but once established they will let you do things on 'autopilot' so you can think about other things while you work.

Types of routines

Every family has its own ways of doing things, so setting up a routine should reflect how your family operates. Here are some routines you might want to consider for your family.

Routines help your child aged **2-4 years** with:

- getting ready in the morning.
- going to bed at night.
- regular 'playdates'.
- eating meals.
- regular play and talk times with a parent each day.
- story time (book reading).
- quiet time each evening.

Routines help your child aged **5-6 years** with:

- . hygiene and health – for example, brushing teeth and washing hands.
- . tidying up, looking after toys.
- . caring for pets.
- . regular ‘playdates’.
- . chores – for example, setting the dinner table, putting away the toys before dinner.
- . hobbies or sport.

Routines help family members of **all ages** with:

- . preparing and eating meals together.
- . family activities – for example, DVD nights.
- . taking turns talking about the day.
- . special one-to-one time with a parent.
- . regular contact with extended family and friends.
- . celebration days, annual events or outings.
- . saying prayers or observing religious events.
- . ensuring you and your spouse get time out to do things for yourselves.

Tips to introduce routines

A good place to start is to write down what you do in a typical day and think about:

- . Could life could be easier and more enjoyable if any of these things ran more smoothly?
- . Could your children and other family members be more involved?
- . Are there things you would like to do more regularly or would like to be doing but are not?

Starting a new routine can be a bit tricky because it means changing the ways your family works now. Here are a few things to think about before you make a start:

- . How will your new routine make life easier or better for you?
- . Can you make a new routine part of an old one? For example, you might get your child to take a new medicine just before she brushes her teeth.
- . Can you set up the routine without constantly having to remind everyone? For example, the end of a television show can signal the beginning of a bedtime routine.

Talk to everyone about the new routine before you try it out. You will probably need to do this more than once while everyone learns what to do.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

Recommended Reads

- [How toddlers thrive: what parents can do today for children ages 2-5 to plant the seeds of a lifelong success](#)
- [The baby bedtime book: say goodnight to sleepless nights](#)
- [The First Three Years: From Infant to Toddler—Laying the Foundation for Raising a Capable, Confident Child](#)