

Establishing a Morning Routine

Aim to make the morning routine smooth and organized for you and your child. If it's a frantic, chaotic free-for-all full of short tempers, lost backpacks and missing shoes, your child might end up having an equally shambolic day.

A well planned morning routine helps children perform better in school and handle the challenges of the day. Parents who set a detailed morning routine are preparing their children for a successful day, as well as preparing them for a successful life.

Identify Problem Areas

If you're hoping to smooth out your morning routine, first identify the problems:

- Is everybody too rushed? Set the alarm for 30 minutes earlier.
- Is your child always forgetting his lunch? Put a reminder note on the door.
- Are your kids cranky and difficult in the mornings? They may not be getting enough sleep. Push lights-out to an earlier time.

Morning Routine Charts

Make a list of everything that your child must accomplish in a morning. It's important that your children feel some ownership of the morning routine, so let them suggest some of the scheduling.

Your kids may enjoy a checklist or sticker chart so they can mark off what they've accomplished. You can also make the morning routine chart a family art project. Children can draw pictures or cut pictures from magazines of a toothbrush, soap, a bowl of cereal and other representations of morning tasks.

Some Tips for Successful Morning Routines

Start with enough sleep. How you handle the morning is directly affected by how well rested you are. Establish a good bedtime routine with your children and be sure they're getting enough sleep.

Do some tasks the night before. Have your children decide what they're wearing the night before (especially the child who is always late because he's not dressed in time) and set out their clothes. When children finish their homework, have them put it in their backpacks and set them near the door. To cut down on morning bathroom time, have kids take showers at night. Don't leave any task for morning that can be done the night before.

Keep your morning schedule loose enough to build in some "wake up time." It's hard for kids to wake up and get going right away. Schedule an extra 10 minutes into your morning routine to let the kids dawdle a little bit after first waking up.

Organize your house so things are convenient. A smooth morning routine means not having to dig around an upstairs closet for gym shoes or run around looking for your schoolbooks. Designate a closet near the door for your children use to hold backpacks, a shelf for permission slip and lunch money, gym bags, musical instruments and anything else your child needs to take with him.

Reward your children for on-time, whine-free mornings. When things go smoothly, tell your kids you're pleased with their performance and give them a reward, a Hershey kiss in their lunch, a weekend day of sleeping in or an equivalent treat. They'll be more likely to repeat the performance.