



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Parenting the
Preschooler



Routines

Why Routines?

Routines are important because they give children a sense of security and control over their environment. Children learn what to expect at different times of the day. They feel pride and satisfaction when they can participate in and perform these routines.

Patterns Children Can Count On

Five tips to establish successful routines with your child:

- Daily routines such as washing hands before meals or reading before bed add consistency to a child's day.
- A daily schedule gives children a sense of security and control. Add pictures to the schedule so children can see what's next. Or post pictures of daily activities on a clock face so children learn what to expect at different times of day.
- Remind children of what is happening next in the routine to help them transition more easily between activities ("After breakfast, it is time to brush your teeth.")
- Encourage children to lead the routine, for example, by picking their own clothes, choosing what app to do, or feeding themselves.
- Establish and stick to a routine. Children will be more cooperative when they know what to expect.

Routines Build Independence

Preschoolers like to be independent but sometimes they need a parent's encouragement. Teaching independence through skills like feeding, hand washing, brushing teeth, and dressing are important steps in development that can be achieved when children are taught how to do each step in each routine.



Image by Esther Merbt from Pixabay

Morning Routines



Photo by Ketut Subiyanto from Pexels

A key to a smooth morning is preparing the night before—make lunches, pack backpacks, and set out clothes. Make sure you allow enough time that your child can go at their own pace.

Some parents find it helpful to create a morning routine chart with pictures and drawings that remind children what tasks need to be completed. Try to remove distractions such as television and favorite books or toys as it can distract them from what needs to get done.

Following a morning routine helps everyone be on time. It also helps children be healthier, better behaved, and perform better in school.

Bedtime Routines



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Preschoolers need 11 to 13 hours of sleep each night to be healthy, behave well, and learn. Establishing a bedtime routine is one way to achieve this. If your child needs to wake up at 7 AM, they need to go to sleep between 6-8 PM.

Be consistent with bedtime routines by starting around the same time each night and going in the same order (e.g. bath, pajamas, brush teeth, read book). Give children gentle reminders before bedtime. Try to encourage calm activities before you start to get them to sleep, such as a bath, books, puzzles, or soothing music. Sometimes the bedtime routine continues after bedtime, such as checking in on a child after a certain amount of time has passed as promised.