



# Preparing Your Child for Kindergarten: Establishing a Routine

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Starting kindergarten is such an exciting time for both kids and parents! It's totally normal to feel a mix of nerves and excitement. To help make this transition smoother, one of the best things you can do is set up a consistent daily routine. This can really help everyone feel more comfortable and ready for the new adventure ahead!

In my classroom, I prioritize teaching about routines. I explain the importance of following a routine, what routines are, and how they can change. We don't establish routines without understanding their purpose; instead, we help children grasp these concepts.

Having a routine can help your child feel safe, confident, and prepared. It doesn't only benefit the children, but the entire family by reducing stress and improving cooperation.



# WHY ROUTINES ARE IMPORTANT

Meliss Racioppa, PhD, a psychologist shared some wonderful insights about the importance of having a routine. She said, "It brings a level of comfort, it's a predictable structure that the children understand and know how to follow. This predictability gives them a sense of mastery and accomplishment." As teachers, we create routines in the classroom to help our little ones feel more relaxed and confident. When they know what to expect, it eases their worries and takes away the fear of the unknown.

Having a clear schedule also helps them grasp the concepts of time, order, and responsibility. That's why I always make it a point for the kids to see our routine schedule. It's a simple way to keep everyone on the same page and excited about what's coming up next!

Having a daily routine can be super helpful for kids!

Here's how:

1. Better Behavior - children who stick to a routine are more likely to show expected behaviors, making life a little smoother.
2. Improve sleep quality - when children have a specific time for winding down, they tend to feel more rested and ready for the day ahead.
3. Support independence - knowing the routine makes children feel more responsible and confident as they understand what comes next.
4. Build time management - routines help your household run like a well-oiled machine, making things easier for everyone.

Creating a daily routine can be a great way to support your child's growth and development!

## DIFFICULTIES KIDS MAY EXPERIENCE

Following a routine wouldn't be a walk in the park at first, even when we have the best intentions. Some children are resistant to change, especially when it's sudden. I often feel anxious whenever children go on vacation as their absence can disrupt their routine. This disruption can lead to noticeable changes in behavior when they return to class. Therefore, I always encourage parents to maintain most of the routine during breaks or to remind the children about the changes once they get back from their vacation. Here are some of the common difficulties that kids may encounter:

1. Resistance to change: some children might find it difficult to switch to a new routine, like waking up and going to bed earlier. That's totally normal! Just remember to explain to your kid the importance of getting well-rested.

2. Separation jitters: especially for little ones who are used to being close to their parents so some kids may struggle to let go during drop-offs. It helps to be patient and reassure them. You may read [Excessive Attachment and Separation Anxiety in Children: Ideas Exchange](#) if this continues to be a problem.
3. Feeling overwhelmed: starting school can be a big change, and it might feel overwhelming for some kids. This can make it harder for them to relax at night, as they may feel tired from school, and this may even make them hesitant to go back.
4. Inconsistencies: developing new routines takes time and commitment. It's important for us to be consistent, as skipping steps can confuse them. Remember, it's all about helping them feel secure and comfortable!

## BEST PRACTICES FOR ESTABLISHING A ROUTINE

Here are some fun and friendly ways to help your child ease into a new routine:

### 1. Start early

Get a jumpstart by embracing your child's school routine about 2-3 weeks before school begins. Talk to them about why having a routine is important - it's a wonderful way to prepare for all the exciting things ahead.

### 2. Practice independence

Get your little one involved in different routines like:

- Letting them help with easy chores like setting up the table and cleaning up
- You can teach them how to pack their bag and their snacks
- Letting them choose what they want to wear in school
- Letting them wash their hands and wiping themselves

### 3. Use Visual Schedules

Just like in school, children can see the class schedule as this can be super helpful! Create a fun checklist at home, like "Brush Teeth," "Fix Bed," "Dress Up," "Eat Breakfast," etc. Let kids check off each task as they complete it; this will help them feel accomplished and keep them on track.

### 4. Talk about the routine

Encourage your child to stick to the routine by making it enjoyable! You might even turn it into a game. In school, we like to play fun sequencing games, and this can help them remember what comes next. Also, let your child know that routines can change, like on no-school days or days that they're feeling under the weather.

## 5. Stick to a wind-down routine

Create a cozy wind-down routine at night to signal it's almost time for sleep. Keeping it calm and consistent will help your child feel more relaxed and ready for bed.

With these cheerful tips, setting into a new routine can be a breeze!

## POSITIVE WIND-DOWN ACTIVITIES

Here are some fun and cozy activities that can help your child transition smoothly into bedtime:

- Reading together - let your child pick out their favorite book for you to read or for them to listen to. Storytime is such a special way to relax!
- Listening to music or white noise - playing some gentle tunes or soothing sounds can create a calm atmosphere that makes bedtime feel more comforting.
- Quiet play - play quiet games like puzzles, blocks, or even coloring/painting.
- Have a little chat - take a moment to talk with your child about their day. Ask what made them happy today. It's a great way to connect before settling in for the night.

Remember, it's a good idea to steer clear of screens at least 30-60 minutes before bedtime, so their sleep isn't interrupted.

Setting up a routine before your child starts kindergarten is one of the best ways to help them feel confident, capable, and secure. With a bit of patience and plenty of love, your family can create a rhythm that works for everyone! This will make school mornings much more peaceful and enjoyable for all of you!

## References

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