

5 Simple Ways to Establish a Routine at Home

Children often feel most secure when they are provided with a sense of structure and routine. You can use simple strategies to help create a more organized and predictable routine for your child at home.

1. Create a Schedule: Put together a general outline of planned activities for the day. Try to establish a daily routine that is consistent over time so that your child has an overall idea of what to expect. Write out a list or create a visual schedule by finding pictures online or drawing simple images. To help your child stay organized, encourage he/she to check the schedule after each task is accomplished and to participate in crossing off completed activities. It can be helpful to use simple language when setting expectations about what will happen next. Try using first/then cuing such as “first, breakfast, then game” to help communicate clearly about the anticipated sequence of events.



2. Use a Timer to Help With Transitions: Use a timer to set time limits for preferred tasks or to demonstrate how much time is remaining until the next activity. Kitchen timers can be useful. Visual timers can be purchased online for a relatively low cost. You may also find pre-programmed timers and free visual timer applications available on your computer, tablet, or phone. Try using additional verbal warnings to prepare your child for the coming transition. For example, “Five more minutes until it’s time to clean up”.

3. Provide Movement Breaks: It is important to allow for movement throughout the day. Ideally, movement breaks are not to be earned or taken away. Rather, they are built in as a structured part of your child’s daily routine. Movement is important for overall physical, mental, and emotional health. Physical activity also helps to provide sensory motor based input, which can be essential to achieving a calm and organized state for learning. Try using online videos to facilitate participation in yoga or structured movement. You can use household items to build an obstacle course or to create stepping stones. For an added challenge, prompt your child to reach the opposite side of the room while pretending the floor is lava. Please refer to www.easterseals.com/ci/ for more movement break ideas.



4. Clean Up Between Tasks: It can be helpful to clean up one task before moving on to another. This communicates a clear message that the previous task is completed and it is time to move on to the next activity. Make cleaning up fun with sing-along songs and teamwork. Create a clean up game by prompting your child to pick up all of the blue toys first or timing your child to see how quickly he/she can put everything back into the container neatly. Try sorting toys by shape, size, color, or purpose for an added challenge.

5. Encourage Participation In Household Chores: Identify household chores that provide a “just right challenge” for your child, allowing them to be a functional participant in the task while maintaining safety as a top priority. Younger children can assist by handing you unfolded clothes from the laundry basket, carrying folded laundry to its designated location, filling up the pet’s water bowl, or sorting clean utensils. Make chores fun by establishing partners or teams for chore completion, selecting options from a chore jar, playing chore B-I-N-G-O, or listening to music while completing chores.



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