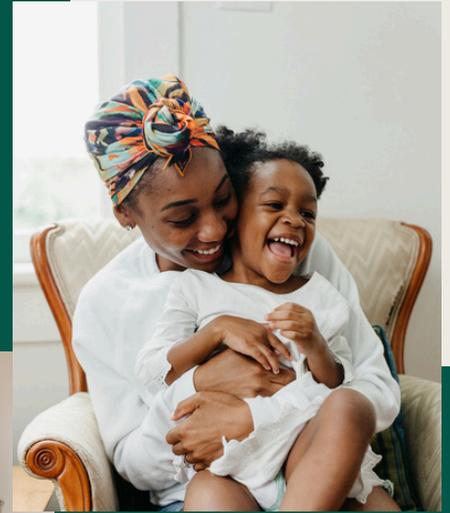


Creating routines for you and your kids



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Why are routines helpful?

Routines help organize your day and keep chaos in check. As the parent, you're in charge, so you generally know what's happening next. But your kid may not know or have forgotten. Kids feel more competent and confident when they know what comes next and what's expected of them.

Transitions go over better with routines, too. Going from something fun, like a playdate, to something not fun, like nap time, is hard for kids. Routines can make these hard transitions feel easier and more familiar. Because routines help kids feel secure, your child may argue with you less and whine less. And that results in less stress for you!

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When to create a routine

Routines work best for situations that happen frequently. As luck would have it, these situations also tend to be most chaotic for families because there are many moving parts.

Don't worry, you're not rigid or boring if you want to add structure to your busiest times of day! You and your kid may even end up enjoying these moments more after you create a routine because there'll be fewer struggles to solve.

Routines work best for:

- Mornings, before school or daycare
- Homework time
- Chore time
- Family dinnertime
- Bedtime

How to start a routine

Pick one routine to create first. You can start with the time of day your family struggles with the most or the least. Up to you!

Plan with your kid. Decide together what you want your child to do during this routine, and in what order (if it matters). To make it a success, keep it to three or four steps for your kid and always build in extra time on your end.

Create a visual aid. Make a chart or poster that lists the tasks and behaviors you expect from your child. Use pictures for little ones who haven't learned to read. You can also let your kid decorate it to help her feel ownership over the routine.

Keep the routine going!

Be consistent. A routine can't become a habit without being done on repeat. Try to use the new routine every day, especially in the beginning, to get your child into the groove.

Give gentle reminders. Nagging or giving commands may get your kid going, but neither will get your kid invested in the routine. When you can, encourage your child to remember what comes next: "I know you know what comes after teeth-brushing!"

Praise your child. To motivate them to follow the routine, use labeled praise to tell them when they're doing a good job: "Wow, I like how you're putting your lunch in your backpack on your own!"



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