

# Routines

[fyi.uwex.edu/parentingthepreschooler/](http://fyi.uwex.edu/parentingthepreschooler/)

## Patterns Children Can Count On

- Repeat actions and events every day, such as washing hands before meals or reading before bed, to add consistency to a child's day.
- Give children a sense of security and control by making a daily schedule with pictures so children can see what comes next.
- Encourage children to lead the routine, for example, by picking their own clothes ("Pick which socks you'd like to wear today.") or feeding themselves ("Grab a banana or some grapes to start your breakfast.").
- 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.")
- Establish and stick to a routine. Children will argue less when they know what to expect.



Photograph by Nancy Munoz

## 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.

# 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.



## Morning Routines

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

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.

## UW-Extension Family Living Programs

"Raising Kids, Eating Right, Spending Smart, Living Well"



For more information, please contact your county UW-Extension office:

<http://counties.uwex.edu/>

[Link To References](#)

Copyright © 2016 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System doing business as the division of Cooperative Extension of the University of Wisconsin-Extension. All rights reserved.

An EEO/Affirmative Action employer, the University of Wisconsin-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements.