



## Getting everyday routines to run more smoothly

The key to getting everyday routines to run smoothly is for you, as the adult, to establish fixed procedures. Start by thinking about how you want the bedtime or morning routine to run. If you do things the same way every time, your child will get used to the routine – which will then run more smoothly.

### Get your child ready for what is going to happen

We all feel more confident if we know what to expect so that we can get ready for it. Young children themselves are not aware of what is going to happen, or when. For example, they do not know which days of the week they go to kindergarten, and which days they stay home. This means that children often experience things as happening suddenly and unexpectedly. For routines to run smoothly, it is therefore important for adults to prepare children properly so they know what is happening.



### Prepare with pictures

One good way to help young children get ready is to show them pictures of what you will be doing. Young children find pictures easier than words to understand and remember. If you show your child a picture of the kindergarten before you leave, he/she will know where you are going. This will reduce the risk of him/her thinking you are going somewhere specific – and then becoming upset when you go somewhere else instead. You can use pictures in your smartphone or print them out.

### Prepare with a picture chart

You can use a picture chart to help get your child ready for the activities he/she will be doing, and in what order. For example, you can use a chart like this to help your child get ready for bed. You can use charts as checklists during the different activities. You can have your child remove the picture of the activity you have finished, and then take the initiative to start the next step in the routine.



### Prepare with videos

Another way to help your child get ready and to increase his/her motivation is to show him/her a video of what you will be doing. If your child does not want to go to the playground, a short video showing children playing on the swings together can increase his/her desire to go.

### Prepare with “first – then”

To increase your child’s motivation, you can use a picture chart for a “first – then” approach. If your child finds it tough to put on his/her overclothes, you can use pictures to remind him/her that you will be doing something fun together once you have put your overclothes on. First we put our overclothes on – then we go to the playground. The picture you use for “then” must be something your child really enjoys.



## Make your child more involved in the routine

We all find it more fun to take part in an activity if we feel involved in it. If help your child become more involved in the routines, you will make him/her more motivated compared to a situation where he/she simply “follows your lead”.

### Let your child choose

A simple way to increase your child’s involvement is to give him/her the chance to choose. It is often enough to let your child make small decisions to increase motivation. For example, in the morning you can let your child choose his/her cap, or whether you should take the lift or use the stairs. Show items or pictures to make it clear to your child what he/she can choose between.



### Give your child a task

Another way to make your child more involved is to give him/her a task to do. For example, you can ask your child to throw his/her diaper in the trash after you have changed him/her, or to turn off the light when you go out. Children think it is fun to do tasks, and they feel special when you ask them to help. When we give children tasks to perform, there is also less risk that they will start doing something we do not want them to do. If you ask your child to help you pack your purchases in the store, for example, there is less risk that he/she will run away.



## Adapt the level of requirements

Children learn from doing things correctly. So to make sure your child can learn the routines, it is important that you help him/her succeed. To do this, give your child appropriately challenging things to do, and help him/her when necessary. It is also important to remember that children can do more or less at different times. If your child is tired, hungry, angry or upset, he/she will be able to do less on his/her own. When your child is in a new environment, or in a place with a lot of noise and movement, he/she will often need more help than otherwise.

If your child is not doing what you asked him/her to, it is a good idea to ask yourself why he/she did not succeed. Didn't your child understand what to do? Wasn't your child able to do what you asked him/her to do? Wasn't your child sufficiently motivated? Then think about what you can do to make it easier next time by preparing, motivating and helping your child a little more.

When your child has become upset or angry, it is even harder for him/her to understand what you want, and to be able to do it. Once a conflict has arisen, it is therefore important that you try to de-escalate it, rather than force your child to give in. Try to stay calm and to reassure your child. When your child has calmed down, you can help to clarify what you were doing.

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