

Maintaining a Routine



When there is a major change in routine or lack of schedule, children may become stressed or anxious about what they are doing next.

References:

<https://zerotothrive.org/routines-for-kids/>

<https://connectability.ca/2010/09/23/using-visuals>

Maintaining a routine can support children in understanding time management, help them to establish good habits and provide them a sense of security so they know what to expect. Research also shows that routines support a child's healthy social and emotional development in early childhood. When children learn to self-regulate their feeling and behaviours, it means they are able to identify and have the skills necessary to manage those feelings so they are less overwhelmed. Children that learn these skills are "better able to adapt in everyday challenges" when stressors arise, when there are new expectations of them or their schedule change.

Here are some tips to consider when creating your child's daily routine:

- Have your child wake up and go to bed at the same time every day Monday to Friday.
- Try to maintain the same morning routine such as getting dressed, having breakfast and brushing your teeth.
- Incorporate physical activity in your daily routine. Play games, go out for a walk or even do a workout together!
- Limit screen time to a certain day(s) and/or time.
- Continue your regular evening routine that may include having dinner together, giving your child a bath and reading a book before bed.
- Be mindful of distractions that may occur at home i.e. a sibling disrupting them.
- Consider upcoming changes to the routine and prepare the child in advanced for what's to come i.e. starting a new extra curricular activity.

If you require assistance in supporting a child with routines, please contact your Resource Consultant at Childinu Oxford or by visiting:

<https://childinuoxford.com/about/meet-our-team/>



If you are interested in incorporating visuals into your child's day, please feel free to use the templates provided. You can print them off or copy them onto a piece of paper. Don't forget to customize to your schedule.

To help make your child's daily routine more successful, provide them with a visual schedule. A visual schedule provides the benefit of reducing anxiety of what is and isn't happening that day and when those activities will occur. A visual schedule can consist of printed pictures, drawn pictures, word or objects around the house.



When using your visual schedule:

- Place the schedule at your child's height so it is easy for them to see and use.
- Label each picture with the activity name.
- As your child completes an activity, have them take the picture/object down to represent that it's complete.
- Don't forget to schedule a snack break.
- Incorporate a timer so they can see how much time they have left at an activity. For younger children, provide them verbal warnings such as "10 more minutes until we are cleaning up for lunch."

For children who need specific, short instructions for their routine, try using a 'First & Then' Board. This type of visual schedule allows you to post two activities at a time: one activity that is happening now and a second activity that is happening next. Explain to your child, "FIRST you need to eat *your lunch* and THEN you can go play outside."

