

Helping your child create a Routine

- Why is it important?
- What things should you keep in mind?
- How can a visual routine help my child?
- How can I support my child to transition from one activity to the next?
- How can I help my child prepare for activities outside their routine?

Helping your child create a routine

Why is it important?

- A predictable and organized home experience help children feel safe.
- It can help prepare them for stressful moments.
- Kids cope better when they know what to expect.
- Routines can help to promote their self-confidence, understanding what is expected of them. They also create spaces for them to explore, develop and connect in a comfortable environment.

Things to Keep in mind

- The structure of the routine will depend on your child's needs, preferences and abilities.
- Be consistent! Follow through with the routine you created.
- Share the routine with other family members, teachers and other significant people in your child's life.
- Praise your child's achievements.
- Avoid overloading your child by talking too much: use simple language, use the same words when prompting and praising.
- Children's needs are always changing, therefore is beneficial to review and adjust the routine depending on how they develop.
- Visual routines are a helpful way to organize and communicate the routine with your child.

How can a visual routine help my child?

➡ **Support communication**

Children with special educational needs may struggle with expressive and receptive speech. Using visual aids can help reinforce verbal instructions.

➡ **Illustrate a sequence**

Sometimes children don't have a concept of time and find it difficult to plan ahead. Visual aids can illustrate their daily or weekly sequence, giving them an understanding of their near future.

➡ **Help with transitions**

A visual schedule can help a child switch to the next activity, by illustrating what comes next. This can prepare them and reduce the anxiety provoked by the unknown.

➡ **Promote independence**

Once your child has gotten used to their routine, they can check the visual routine by themselves and carry out the next activity.

➡ **Facilitate changes in the routine**

Seeing the change can help the child understand and visualize the new activity. When inserted in advance, every time the child needs to see the visual routine, they can be reminded that something new or different is coming.

Choosing the best visual aids for your Child's Routine

All children have different needs and preferences. Take your time to understand what is the best option for your child and remember to involve them in the process of creating their visual routine. You can enjoy together the activity of organizing a new daily or weekly routine. Here are some ideas you can try out:

- 1 Create **visual timetables** that show your child's routine in detail.

There are plenty free printable resources online, for you to find pictures that represent your child's day.

Then you print them, cut them and laminate them. Finally organize them on a board.



- 2 For some children, seeing drawings of the routine, might be too abstract. **Taking pictures** of themselves, places or activities can be very helpful.

Then you print them, cut them and laminate them. Finally organize them on a board.



Snack



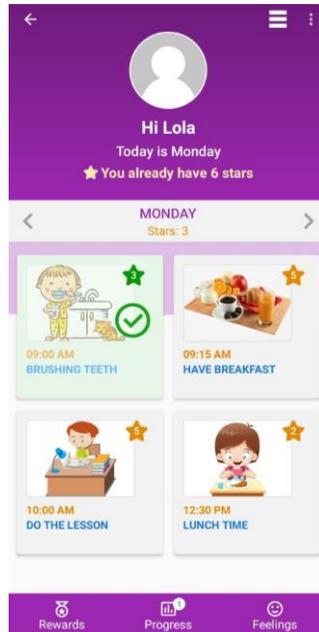
Park

Choosing the best visual aids for your Child's Routine

3 For children that prefer to communicate through **technology**, there are some apps you can download in your mobile.

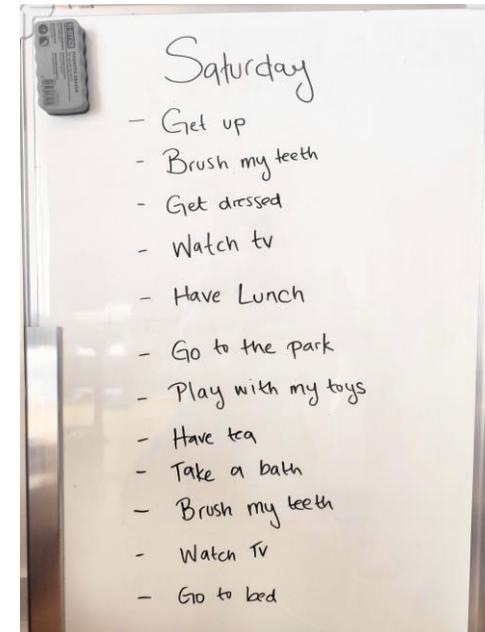


Kids to do list



Fun Routine

4 For children that know how to read, you can use a **whiteboard** and write the schedule together.



If you need help choosing the best visual schedule for your child, finding the right printable resources, or learning how to use the apps feel free to contact the school's family support worker Josefina:

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07960515129 (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday)

How can I support my child to transition from one activity to the next?

Change can be hard for children with special needs. Even when they have a established routine, some may find it difficult transitioning from one activity to the next. Here are some strategies that can help you support your child, avoiding meltdowns or anxiety.

Communicate and prepare your child

- ➡ Give advance warning.
- ➡ If your child has sense of time, you can let them know the time something is going to end. If they don't, try to remind them throughout the activity.
- ➡ You can use a visual timer (watch, timer, sand clock).
- ➡ Let your child know what is coming next.
- ➡ You can use a visual schedules to show them what is the next activity.
- ➡ You can use social stories that describe the transition from one activity to another.
- ➡ Allow for extra time: try not to rush, because your child will notice and might get more anxious. Prepare yourself for a slower transition because your child might need more time to adjust.

Incorporate soothing elements during the transition

- ➡ Transition activities: include small activities your child enjoys (for example, jumping or singing a song).
- ➡ Use sensory stimulation: some children relax when they receive certain sensory input (for example, play music, smell some scent or squeeze a stress ball).
- ➡ Use transition objects: let your child bring an object they are attached to and that helps them calm down.

Remember: Consistency is key and It takes time for children to adjust to new transition routines.

How can I help my child prepare for activities outside their routine?

As much as we try to stick to our routine, sometimes we need to do new or unusual tasks, celebrate a special occasion or go for a holiday. Here are some tips that can help you plan ahead

Unusual or new activity

- 1 Prepare and communicate the plans**
When talking about it, use concrete and simple language. Be sure to talk about it several times before it happens.
- 2 Use other ways of communication**
show photos, create visual schedules, or read social stories.
- 3 When having an appointment, let people know about your child's needs**
Talk to the person who will receive you and ask if they can help by making small changes in the environment (temperature, lighting). It can be useful to arrange a visit to a new place, just for the child to get familiar with it.
- 4 Give yourself extra time**
just in case your child needs more time to adjust.
- 5 Incorporate elements that usually help your child stay calm**
Use things that can help regulate your child's anxiety. For example toys, snacks, breathing exercise or music.

How can I help my child prepare for activities outside their routine?

Special Occasions

- 1 Prepare and communicate the plans**
When talking about it, use concrete and simple language. Be sure to talk about it several times before it happens.
- 2 Use other ways of communication**
show photos, create visual schedules, or read social stories.
- 3 Gradually decorate your home**
If you are decorating your home and your child has trouble adapting to new things, it could be helpful to do it little by little. Do it with them or find a time to show the changes, so they aren't surprised when seeing them.
- 4 Be mindful of your child's sensory processing difficulties**
Some children prefer or reject certain kind of sensory stimulation. Think about lights, sounds, scents that may affect them. Focus your decorations on things that they'll enjoy.
- 5 When celebrating away from home, communicate with other people so they can help create a friendly environment**
You can show pictures of the new place, and talk to the host so they can help you make the space as friendly as possible for your child. It can also be helpful to take with you their favourite snacks and toys, so they feel a sense of familiarity.
- 6 Avoid crowded areas**
When going shopping or public places, avoid the crowded hours. You can also search for special events or time slots for children with special needs.

How can I help my child prepare for activities outside their routine?

Going on a holiday

- 1 Prepare and communicate the plans**
When talking about it, use concrete and simple language. Be sure to talk about it several times before it happens. Do this before the holidays, but it can also be helpful to go through the day's plan every morning.
- 2 Use other ways of communication**
show photos, create visual schedules, or read social stories.
- 3 Choose a destination you and your child can enjoy**
Think about what they like: do they prefer water? Do they prefer a quiet place?
- 4 Bring your child's favourites with you**
toys, snacks DVDs or anything that forms part of their routine. This can give a sense of comfort or stability.
- 5 Talk to the hotel, restaurants, or other providers**
If you need special rooms, have dietary requirements, or need to ask for anything that could help your child have a good time, call them. Remember to explain why, it's more likely they'll help you.
- 6 Be gentle with yourself and your child**
Not all things will go as planned, you or your child might feel overwhelmed. This is fine, just remember to enjoy each other.
- 7 Visit the station or airport beforehand**
If your child gets overwhelmed with crowds, and you are travelling by train, bus, or airplane, might be worth taking them to the station or airport and showing them around. Seeing pictures, videos or social stories can also help prepare your child.

If you have any questions, are interested in additional material or need any kind of support, don't hesitate to contact me.

Email: j.verdagner@withkids.org.uk

Call/text: 07960515129 (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday)

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