

Busy Families: Establishing a Morning Routine



Don't worry, it's not just you: mornings are pretty much the busiest times for any family. The whirlwind of preparations before the hectic dash out the door to work, school and/or child care can be crazy-making, to put it mildly. But with a little advanced planning, there are ways to keep it simple, get organized and actually stay sane during the household morning rush hours.

- **Start Your Morning Routine the Night Before**
Just before bedtime, to talk with your child about how the day went, and what's up for tomorrow—this is a great chance to check on forgotten permission slips, school activities, etc.
- **Try Taking Nighttime Baths or Showers**
Bathing at night helps settle kids down for sleeping, and eases bathroom chaos in the morning.
- **Make Tomorrow's Lunches After Dinner**
Older children can prepare lunches themselves. But remember to plan ahead, grocery-wise, to avoid any missing ingredient crises.
- **Lay Out Clothes Before Bed**
Pick outfits the night before—including shoes and socks. Let children choose their own clothes or at least make suggestions, and for stress-free dressing, go easy on accessories and clothes which need ironing or last-minute fussing.
- **Pre-Set Breakfast**
Fill bowls of cereal the night before so all young children have to do in the morning is get their milk, which is pre-poured into cups in the 'fridge.
- **Put Stuff by the Door (and in the Car!)**
Have all backpacks, books, jackets, instruments, after-school supplies, etc. in a designated spot by the front door for easy pick-up, or in another "To School" area or drop box. Make sure homework gets put into the backpack as soon as it's completed, as well as signed notes, etc. Then, put an extra pair of shoes, a jacket and a non-perishable lunch in the car... just in case!
- **Give Yourself More Time in the Morning**
Getting everyone up 30 minutes earlier can make an incredible difference. If your kids move at different speeds in the mornings, staggering wake-up times may make things easier, too.
- **Personalize Morning Rituals**
Make mornings special by waking up with a song, phrase or silly way of greeting the day. But be sure whatever you do fits your child's personal style—some kids need time before they're ready to smile or deal with anyone at all!
- **Devote Some Time to Breakfast Together**
Try to take at least 15 minutes to eat your morning meal as a family at least once a week. The kids can set the table the night before.
- **Eliminate Any Unnecessary Distractions—Do Not Turn On the Television!**
A radio is a better choice for the morning news, or to check on weather and school cancellations.
- **Use a Schedule, Timer and Calendar**
A dry-erase board or picture chart is a great way to remind your children of daily routines—comb hair, brush teeth, make bed, feed pets, etc. Use a kitchen timer to get older kids motivated. And looking at a calendar together on Sunday nights will help you all prepare for the week's events.
- **Pay Attention to What's Important**
Even on the most frantic mornings, don't forget to praise good behavior, give the kids room to be imperfect, and remind everyone to say "I love you and have a great day!"

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