**Family Routine: Why and How they Work**

**Source:** [www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

## **Routines: the basics**

Family routines set out **how families organise themselves** to get things done, spend time together and have fun. Routines help family members know who should do what, when, in what order and how often.

Routines also let your children know what’s important to your family. For example, really special routines are sometimes called [rituals](https://raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups/family-life/routines-rituals-relationships/family-rituals). These can help strengthen your shared beliefs and values, and build a sense of belonging and togetherness in your family.

## **Why routines are good for children**

Routines can be good for children for several reasons.

**Safety, belonging and relationships**
Routines can be part of an organised and predictable home environment, which helps children and teenagers feel safe, secure and looked after. And a predictable family life can also help children cope during development changes like puberty, or life events like the birth of a new child, divorce, illness or a house move.

Also, routines built around having fun or spending time together foster a sense of belonging and strengthen family relationships. For example, reading a story together before bed, sharing regular family meals or having a kick with your child before soccer practice can be special time for you and your child.

**Skills and responsibility**
Having [chores](https://raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups/family-life/rules-chores-pocket-money/chores-for-children) as part of family routines helps children and teenagers develop a sense of responsibility and some basic skills like time management. These are skills children can use for life.

And when children can do their parts of the routine with less help or supervision from you, it also helps them become more independent.

**Healthy habits**
Routines can teach younger children healthy habits, like brushing their teeth, taking medicine regularly, exercising, or washing their hands after using the toilet.

This means that routines can be good for children’s health. For example, children who wash their hands more regularly might be less likely to get colds and other common illnesses.

Also, routines can reduce stress, and lower stress is good for children’s immune systems.

Daily routines help set our body clocks too. For example, bedtime routines help children’s bodies ‘know’ when it’s time to sleep. This can be a big help when children reach adolescence and their body clocks start to change.

## **Why routines are good for parents**

Routines take some effort to create. But once you’ve set them up, they have many benefits:

* When life is busy, routines can help you feel more organised and in control, which lowers your stress.
* Regular and consistent routines can help you feel like you’re doing a good job as a parent.
* Routines help your family get through your daily tasks more efficiently and free up time for other things.
* Routines often mean you don’t have to sort out disputes and make decisions. For example, if Sunday night is pizza night, no-one needs to argue about what’s for dinner.

## **What makes a good daily routine?**

A good routine is one that suits your family. It also has three key features.

**Well planned**
In a good routine, everyone understands their roles, knows what they need to do and sees their roles as reasonable and fair. For example, your children know that they take turns with washing up and drying up each night after dinner. As children get older, they can have a say in planning routines.

**Regular**
Good routines become part of everyday family life. For example, you might all look forward to Sunday night barbecues with your children’s grandparents.

**Predictable**
In a good routine, things happen in the same order each time. Everyone knows what to expect for the day. For example, you always wash school uniforms on the weekend, so you know they’ll be ready for Monday morning.

## **Toddlers and preschoolers: ideas for daily routines**

For toddlers and preschoolers, you could have routines for:

* getting ready in the morning
* eating meals
* spending time playing and talking together
* reading books or telling stories
* having quiet time and going to bed at night.

## **School-age children: ideas for daily routines**

For school-age children, you could have routines for:

* getting ready in the morning and going to bed at night
* doing after-school activities like hobbies or sport
* doing chores – for example, setting the dinner table, unpacking the dishwasher, helping with the laundry, or caring for pets
* doing homework.

## **Teenagers: ideas for daily routines**

For teenagers, you could have routines for:

* getting ready in the morning or winding down after coming home from school
* doing laundry or other chores like making beds and cleaning rooms
* doing homework
* doing after-school activities, including hobbies or sport
* spending time with family
* relaxing before bed.