

## DLS Helps to DIY



Parents, ah, August: it signals the beginning of school, which means we often hustle back into a routine after relaxing all summer. Simply by their nature, these cycles we go through in life help establish necessary patterns to guide our days. There are times we may feel constrained with the thought of having to follow a routine, but it is very beneficial for everyone, not only the children. Stop for a moment and visualize how you feel when your morning goes smoothly, or when the children go to bed without a fight. In the morning, you are on time without needing to rush or bark orders; in the evening everyone knows what to expect and cooperation is achieved!

### Tips for Creating Daily Routines:

- As a family, identify the steps needed for the routine. Begin with morning and evening plans. Allow the children to provide input into what they view as important; their ideas may surprise you!
- Limit the number of steps to a maximum of 6 steps. If there are too many steps, it may become overwhelming for the children. You will find an example below.
- Use a chart or list with pictures for each step or task. Post the list in a family-friendly spot to encourage your children to “read” them.
- Review the list with the children until they cooperate on their own a majority of the time. Be prepared that children may need continued support and reminders even after they perform tasks independently. (In the same way traffic signs are posted as reminders for us even after we “know” the rules and obtain our license, we are more comfortable with them and rely upon them often.)
- Be consistent with following the routines because that will reinforce them. Children thrive on predictability because it helps them to feel empowered when they know what to expect.

### Sample Bedtime Routine:

Steps: Put on pajamas; brush teeth; get in bed; read; hug and kiss; lights out.

- Lay the children’s clothes out at night. Include socks, shoes and backpacks in a designated place.
- Begin your bedtime routine 30 minutes before your ideal time for the children to be in bed. On average, it takes about that length of time for the children to complete all of the tasks necessary to be ready for bed.

And finally, you can transform a routine into a ritual by incorporating a family-bonding moment during the task. For example, give eye contact and smile or hug your child during the routine and bonding is enhanced! The positive attention will become a natural reinforcement for the entire family.

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For additional tips on routines see <http://washington.cce.cornell.edu/home-family/parent-pages/challenging-behaviors/the-importance-of-bedtime>