

# Establishing Routines

One of the keys to creating a happy household is establishing clear daily and weekly routines with your children. Having clear routines lets everyone know what is expected, avoids problems and creates helpful habits for everyone.

## The Power of Good Routines

Many problems are caused or made worse by poor routines in the home. For example, many children with behaviour problems don't have a good bedtime routine. They tend to go to bed late, don't sleep well and as a result are more likely to be irritable in the morning and less likely to concentrate in school. As a result, negotiating a regular and early bedtime for your child (including a relaxed time away from screens and technology) will mean they are more rested in the morning and more able to concentrate in school.

## Creating a Good Routine

### Break into small steps

Sit down and think through what an ideal routine would be for you. Then break down this routine into small, clear steps that tell the child exactly what you want to happen. For example a bedtime routine could be:

6.00pm	TV/play outside
7.00pm	Supper
7.30pm	Pyjamas on and go to bedroom
7.35pm	Read with parent
8.00pm	Lights out

### Have a 'natural' reward at the end

Try to make sure that a reward happens at the end of the routine. For example, reading when in bed, playtime after homework, or TV after doing household chores.

### Explain the routine in advance

Sit down with your children and go through the steps of the routine in advance. Involve them as much as possible and let them make some decisions (For example, they could choose which book to read).

## Put the routine on a chart

Drawing the routine on to a clear chart can be very helpful. The more attractive the chart is the better – some parents use photos on the chart to remind the child of what is expected (for example, a photo of the child reading or asleep). It can be really helpful to make the chart together with your child as well as letting them decorate it etc.

## Start small and be patient

Good routines take time to get established – especially if your children aren't used to them or they are far away from the ideal routine.

This often means starting with a routine that is easier to establish. Then, when you have more confidence you can tackle a more difficult routine, gradually, like in the example below:

### Establishing an early bedtime gradually

Your child goes to bed at 10pm and you want to move this to a better time of 8.30pm. Rather than switching immediately to 8.30pm – which is likely to be very hard – do this gradually.

- 1** Sit down with your child and explain that you are moving to an earlier bedtime of 8.30pm and that you are going to do this gradually.
- 2** Agree that for the first night he has to be in bed by 9.50pm, the second night by 9.40pm, the third by 9.30pm...
- 3** Give a small reward for each night he makes the target (for example, he gets 5 cent extra pocket money each night, which he can spend at the weekend).

## Be encouraging

Being positive and encouraging is really important to make routines and rewards work. For example, if you are helping your son learn to dress quicker (and beat the timer) be really encouraging as you go along. For example, when you see him trying say *'You are doing well, you have got your trousers on, only your jumper to go now – nearly there'*.

## Establish a weekly routine

Weekly routines ensure that everyone takes responsibility for chores and that important family events get done. Weekly routines can be created with children as part of a family meeting and can be altered as needed as part of ongoing planning time with children.

# Routine Chart Examples

## Ben's Morning Chart

I put on my:

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
vest	✓	✓	✓		
pants	✓	✓	✓		
shirt	✓	✓	✓		
trousers	✓	✓	✓		
tie	✓	✓	✓		
socks	✓	✓	✓		
shoes	✓	✓	✓		

ready for school!

★ ★ ★

## MY EVENING SCHEDULE

	6-7 pm TV/Play 	7 pm Supper 	by 7:30 pm Pyjamas on 	7:30 pm Read Together 	8 pm Lights out 
MON					
TUE					
WED					
THUR					
FRI					
SAT					
SUN					

This weeks points =