Morning routine for school: tips

How things go at home in the morning can set the tone for the day ahead. A predictable and positive morning routine for school can help children arrive at school feeling calm, fed and ready to make the most of the first few hours of the day.

Morning routine for school: the whys and hows

Children don’t understand time in the same way as grown-ups. This can make school mornings a stressful time of day for families. But staying calm and getting along in the morning will help you all feel positive about the day ahead. For example, fighting with children in the morning makes it harder for you to work well. It even increases the risk of you having an accident at work.

The most useful way to reduce morning chaos is to establish a morning routine for school. Sticking to a morning routine for school helps your children predict what’s coming, and remember what they need to do.

Planning ahead for school mornings: the night before

The first step in your morning routine for school is to think about what you need to do and work out a plan for doing it. You’ll probably find that you can do many things the night before.

Here are some ideas:

- Try to find out the night before (or even earlier) if there is something special going on at school the next day.
- Organise lunches and set the breakfast table ready for the morning rush.
- Get your child to have a bath the night before. This means you won’t have to worry about this in the morning.
- You might know something is going to come up that could cause conflict, like buying lunch or choosing which clothes to wear. Talk about it the night before when everybody has time and you’re all less likely to be stressed.
- Think about having a weekly schedule or calendar with reminders of what your child needs to take to school each day – for example, library books, sports clothes, show and tell, and so on.
- Think about getting ready for your day the night before as well, to help ease time pressure in the morning.

Try to read school newsletters and check bags for notes the night before. You could also try to prepare clothes, sign school notes, and get school bags ready the night before.

Your morning routine for school: tips

- Try getting up 15-30 minutes earlier. The extra time might help things run more smoothly. Also try to allow plenty of time to get from home to school. Rushing can really increase everyone’s stress levels.
- Think about an alarm clock for children who find it hard to wake up or don’t like getting out of bed.
- Tackle the morning as positively and as optimistically as you can. Good moods can be infectious. One way to do this is by focusing on the positive aspects of your children’s behaviour and praising them – for example, ‘Great to see you eating some toast’.
- If your children are young, remind them what they’re meant to be doing and when. Simple ‘to do’ checklists, even with pictures, can help as a reminder.
- Once your children are old enough, encourage them to do more for themselves – for example, getting dressed on their own, making their own breakfast, and tidying up after themselves. Mornings are easier when your children are more independent.
- Cut down on distractions. Television can distract children from getting ready, and many families have a rule about no television in the morning. Think about leaving the TV off, unless it’s a special treat for being ready on time.
- Give your children calm and clear instructions about what you want them to do, and follow up with specific praise as soon as they start to cooperate. Try not to give your children extra attention for arguing, whining or stalling. Even negative attention is an incentive for them to keep going with this behaviour.