

Schedules and Routines

Helping children find their rhythm for success!



The importance of schedules and routines for children

Remember that classic holiday movie about a kid named Kevin who has a lot of free time on his hands when he's left at home alone? School is out and there's no adult supervision. So, what does he do? He stays up late, he eats unhealthy foods, and he binge watches old movies and television shows. At first, he's having the time of his life exploring his newfound freedom. But over time, he recognizes the importance of scheduling and routines.

Scheduling refers to “*the time at which you do something*”. Examples can include arriving at school by 7:30am or eating dinner at 6:00pm. **Routines** are “*the order in which you do things*”. Rather than focusing on time, the focus is on consistency. Examples can include taking a bath, putting on pajamas, brushing teeth, reading a bedtime story, and listening to music to prepare for bedtime.

Studies have shown that schedules and routines are important for children's emotional, cognitive, and social development. For example, predictable and consistent schedules in classrooms help children feel secure and comfortable. Schedules and routines also help children understand the expectations of the environment and reduce the frequency of behavior problems, such as tantrums and acts of aggression. Finally, schedules and routines can help children maintain a healthy weight and physically active lifestyle.

MY DAILY ROUTINES

NAME:

MORNING ROUTINE	M	T	W	T	F

EVENING ROUTINE	M	T	W	T	F

The next three sections of this module will give you and your family tips for developing schedules and routines that include moving together, thinking together, and being together!

Move Together: Scheduling activity into your family routine

Creating family physical activity schedules are an excellent way to spend quality time together, perform healthy movements, and live a healthy lifestyle. Physical activity schedules that give children choices and are balanced with individual and planned activities (parent directed vs. child directed, indoor vs. outdoor, mindful times vs. active times) result in a higher rate of child engagement. In addition, [studies](#) have also shown that the length of child play can affect their social and cognitive development (a play period that is longer than 30 minutes leads to higher levels of social and cognitive play).



Consider creating a schedule of activities that will lead you and your children to have positive physical activity experiences throughout the day. Remember to start with simple activities and work your way up to more challenging activities. This will help to promote consistency with your activity routine. Below is an example physical activity schedule created by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 minute brisk walk	30 minute brisk walk	30 minute brisk walk	Weight Training	30 minute brisk walk	30 minute brisk walk	Weight Training
						

Question: How might you add in some choice and variety to this schedule? **Answer:** You could add different types of activities (e.g., biking, skateboarding, etc.) to promote enjoyment of activity in your kids. Keep in mind that the more children can help decide activities, the more engaged they will be.

Think Together: Developing a routine of meaningful activities

Schedules and routines are not only important for regular physical activity engagement, but for other meaningful activities, including homework, household chores, and family time. When planning family schedules and routines, consider the following factors: the balance of

types of activities, the tempo or pace of activities, the amount of time your child can focus on the activity, what times of day children are most alert, the number of adults available, and the fact that longer play periods result in higher levels of play behaviors.

A daily schedule will help you and your family prioritize your wants and needs efficiently and offers you structure to support your goals. Benefits of a daily schedule include: (1) scheduling time to meet all daily goals, (2) boosting productivity, (3) limiting procrastination, (4) establishing healthy habits, and (5) enjoying a good work-life balance. Check out the example daily schedule for a school weekday below.

Check the Family Calendar for events!

DAILY SCHEDULE

<p>GOOD MORNING!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wake-Up ON TIME Get dressed Wash Breakfast Take Out Trash 	<p>BODY FLEX CHOICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bike or Scooter Playground/Park Shoot hoops Seasonal -leaf jump, snowman... INPACT at Home Videos
<p>GOOD AFTERNOON!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk Dog Empty Dishwasher Homework Dinner <p>BODY FLEX (30 MINUTE)</p> <p>MIND FLEX (30 MIN.)</p>	<p>MIND FLEX CHOICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read Write a Story Draw, color, paint, or craft Puzzles Listen to music Play educational video game
<p>GOOD EVENING</p> <p>FAMILY FLEX OR FREE TIME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash-Up Brush Teeth Pajamas Bed ON TIME 	<p>FAMILY FLEX!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Activity Game Walk or bike ride INPACT at Home Videos Family Movie Family Crafting Card or Board Game

On the left, the boxes are the non-negotiables or routines, broken down by times of the day. To the right are options for choice children can plug into the routine schedule. When planning your daily schedule for a school week, what would work best for your family? How might your family's day look different? What non-negotiables or routines work for your family that you could put in the left-hand boxes? What activities for mind, body and family-time choices might you put in the right-hand boxes?

Notice the "Check the family calendar for events" reminder at the top. This is one way you can help your family keep track of when the daily schedule may be altered for events, like doctor appointments, sports practices, birthday parties, and other activities that come up.

How would you create your daily family schedule? It doesn't have to look exactly like the example above. Once completed, how might you share or post it? Some ideas could be to share it electronically, print it out, write it on paper or poster board, or use a dry erase or chalkboard.

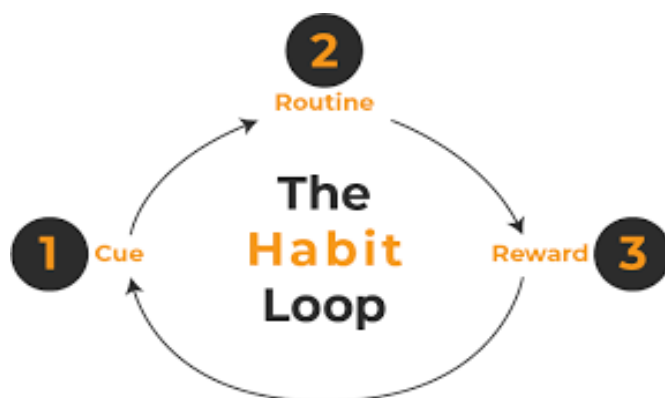
At the end of each day, as a family, review what activities you did from the daily schedule and discuss what you learned from the activities completed. This daily review with children helps take information from their short-term memory to their long-term memory. The review will also help with future planning based on how each activity went. Check out the next section for additional tips.

Tips for creating your own family schedule

1. Have a clear, detailed schedule that each family member can follow.
2. Consider posting the schedule and reviewing it at the beginning of the week and at the end of each day. This can eliminate unpredictability and confusion for your child.
3. Create the family schedule and routine with your child's help to ensure that the activities included are the ones they want to participate in.
4. Initiate a family discussion about the “non-negotiables” of the schedule and routine to help your child understand the importance of these meaningful activities.
5. When designing the plan, consider fun and engaging activities that promote the health and well-being of each member of your family. Keep in mind, everyone needs downtime.
6. The ability to have flexibility in the schedule (e.g., extending activities or shifting to other activities based on how the day is going) will make the plan more enjoyable.

Turning schedules and routines into habits

When your family consistently follows a schedule and routine, this structure can more easily turn into a habit. A **habit** is a “regular practice that can be hard to give up once formed”.

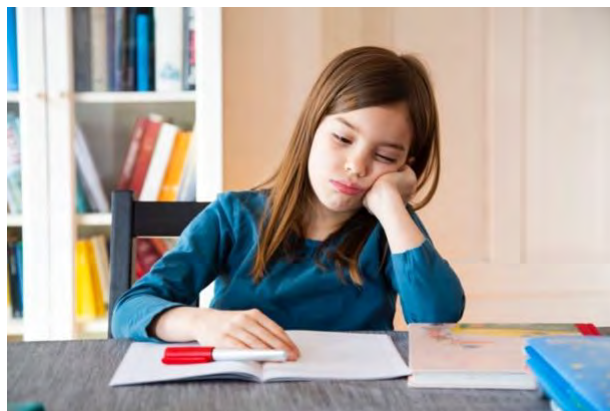


A habit formation process of cue-routine-reward will help in the development of a habit. An example of this is when you set out a toothbrush (cue), your child puts the toothpaste on and brushes their teeth (routine), followed by a bedtime story (reward). If done consistently, brushing your teeth will become a habit. This habit formation loop can be made with any behavior or routine you seek. Another

example would be you, the caregiver, making lunch and setting it on the table while playing a consistent song (cue); your child comes to the table, eats the food, and cleans up after (routine). This is followed by 20 minutes of outdoor play with your family (reward). Rewards can also be small gifts or points to earn a prize.

Remember, your child may try to test boundaries and limits when asked to do some activities and routines. There may also be conflicts between you and your child *during* activities and routines. Your child may do this verbally, physically, or by ignoring you when talking to them. This can take the joy out of the day and make it difficult to follow the schedule and routine that you have created. If this happens, try the following strategies:

- Directing your child calmly with as few words as possible.



- Help them start to put away the materials. Then, get ready for the next item on the schedule.
- Kneeling to their eye level and quietly using your voice.
- Use sentences that start with “When you do..., Then we can do...” or “If you..., Then we...”
- Walk away for a few minutes, and then return and remind them.
- If they begin to comply, praise their effort!
- Reinforce them with a reward such as a sticker or other incentive.

Remember, each kid in your family may need a different strategy to motivate their participation in a new routine or schedule. So, consider adapting your strategies (cues and rewards) to meet the unique needs of each family member.

Be Together: Helping to create positive family experiences!

The opportunity to engage in meaningful activities during the day is a great way to strengthen your family by enjoying time together. Scheduling family time can be difficult with so many demands in our lives. And, even when we schedule family time, you might find it hard to be fully present when creating a family schedule with your children. This is where mindfulness is essential: thoroughly engaging and fully paying attention to your child’s voice, as well as providing choices when developing your family routines, is essential. Most importantly, being fully present during scheduled family activities is essential for creating a more positive relationship between you and your child. To get the most out of your family time, everyone needs to be in the present. This allows for meaningful discussion and sharing in learning during the experience. Family schedules and routines are an excellent way to help children find their rhythm for success! To get started, take the 20-day InPACT schedules and Routines Activity Challenge.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Scott Martin, MEd, has a passion for helping high-risk students and their families by collaboratively partnering with other educators to support and lead them. He has succeeded as a teacher, principal in four school districts, basketball coach, and in his current position at the Michigan Department of Education. He has advocated for support to meet the needs of students across the state, including his son, who receive special education services for mental health needs. Resources and supports exist, but many children and their families cannot access them. Scott is committed to connecting children with existing resources and supports to

help them thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. As an advocate for children and families, the successes that he has witnessed when they receive the help, they need motivates him to be a champion for all children in any way he can.