

Helping Children Understand Routines and Classroom Schedules

HANDOUT

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Schedules and routines are important because:

- ↳ They influence a child's emotional, cognitive, and social development.
- ↳ They help children feel secure and comfortable.
- ↳ They help children understand the expectations of the environment.
- ↳ They help reduce the frequency of behavior problems (e.g., tantrums).
- ↳ They can result in higher rates of child engagement.



Remember:

- ↳ A schedule that is followed consistently helps make settings more predictable for children and adults.
- ↳ When planning activity schedules, caregivers should consider the balance of activities (outside vs. inside, active vs. passive, teacher directed vs. child directed, the pace of activities, and the length of young children's attention span).
- ↳ Longer play periods can result in higher levels of play behaviors.
- ↳ Teachers and caregivers should include blocks of time where children have choices between different activities and materials.
- ↳ At the beginning of the school year, caregivers should discuss the classroom schedule using a picture or object chart to help children understand what will come next.



A routine is an event that is completed on a regular basis, frequently involving a series of responses (such as a bedtime routine involving having a snack, bathing, reading a book, and cuddling).

- ↳ During routines children learn about the sequence of activities, they begin to anticipate what will happen next, and they work on becoming more independent (e.g., learning to dress and undress).
- ↳ Children are less likely to engage in challenging behavior when they are aware of and can anticipate changes in the routine.