

Routines give children clear boundaries, expectations, and consistency. We can say it gives children a predictable routine as a foundation in their lives. When children can predict what will happen next, this helps them feel secure and prepared. Routines also give children a sense of security as they understand the rules and what is expected. Routines are helpful to children as they develop a sense of mastery in themselves and in their day to day lives.

Steps to creating routines/schedules and rules:



Identify the routines/schedules/rules.

For routines and schedules:

- * Identify important daily activities and decide the order they should happen.
- * Identify key times of the day when the activities should occur and make a schedule.
- * Be sure the schedule works for the whole family.

For rules:

- * Be as specific as possible.
- * Focus on specific behaviors. Avoid vague rules like “be good.”
- * Start with one or two rules and add new rules as needed. Having too many rules will be difficult to follow.
- * Rules should be realistic and fit your child’s age and development.



Explain the routines, schedules /rules.

- * Talk to your child about the routines and rules and have him repeat them back to you.
- * Use simple charts with pictures to visually display the routines/schedules.
- * Keep in mind that young children often need reminders about what to do.
- * Rules can and should be repeated often. Reminders, like routine and rules charts, can be placed in locations where your child can see them.



Follow the routines/rules.

- * All family members should try to follow the routine and family rules.
- * Your child may not always want to follow the routine or rules; provide reminders and support when to help your child be successful.
- * If you’re tired or stressed, it may be difficult for you to follow the routine or enforce the rules. Try to stick with it as much as possible.



Provide positive behavior supports

- * Provide descriptive feedback to encourage positive behavior. Say, “I like how you put your toys up!”
- * Use redirection to guide your child in making positive choices.
- * Direct your child’s focus on positive, acceptable behavior.
- * Instead of telling your child what not to do, give clear directions on what to do. For example, it’s fun to play in the front yard, but we do not play near the street.

Benefits of establishing routines:

1. Routines help eliminate power struggles.
2. Routines help children cooperate.
3. Routines help children become more independent and they feel more in charge of themselves.
4. Routines help children learn to “look forward” to things they enjoy, such as playing outside after rest time.



Remember:

1. Be consistent with the routine and rules.
2. Rules are consistently enforced; routines/schedules can be flexible. If the routine changes, let your child know about the change.
3. Rules should be enforced the same way no matter who is caring for your child (including grandparents and babysitters) to provide a consistent message. Routines should also be consistent as much as possible.

For more information, please call the Mississippi Early Childhood Inclusion Center at 601-266-4745 or visit, <https://mecic-usm.org/family-support/>.

Resource:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Creating structure and rules. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/structure/index.html>