

Structure, Schedules, & Routines... Oh My!

Although your child probably won't tell you this, all children need structure. Children like knowing what to expect and enjoy predictability. Routines and schedules provide this by allowing children to know what to expect throughout the day.

Tips for Building Structure

1. Be consistent - Do the same thing every time!
2. Predictability - Help your child know what to expect!
3. Follow-through - Say what you mean and mean what you say!

Tips for Creating Routines & Schedules

1. Identify a Routine

- 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 routine
- Make a plan that works for everyone in the family
- Decide what works best for your child's age and ability. For example, some children may have difficulty with a 2-step routine whereas other children may do it with ease and need more steps in the routine.

2. Explain the Routine

- Make sure your child knows what you want them to do and when to do it.
- Put the plan in a simple chart and use pictures if that helps your child.
- Some younger children may need reminders!

3. Follow the Routine

- Whenever possible, be consistent!
- If you're tired or stressed, it may be difficult to follow the routine but try to stick with it as much as possible

4. Motivation

- Use positive reinforcement such as praise to let your child know that you like the way they are following the routine
- Build a reward or privilege into the routine by saying, "When X, Y, Z are done, THEN you can watch a show." (See Below)

5. Consider natural consequences when a routine isn't followed, such as choosing not to put the Lego blocks away might result in losing an important Lego piece.

Sample After School When-Then Plan



When you:

Unpack your backpack



Hang up your coat



Eat your snack



Do your homework



Then you can:

Play outside



Watch TV

Helpful Tips

- It's okay to be flexible within your structure, routine, and schedule when needed. Just be sure to explain it to your child so they know what to expect! And then get back on track when possible.
- Structure, schedules and routines are important no matter who is caring for your child, including grandparents and babysitters.
- If you have special events or outings planned, go over the schedule with your child so they know what to expect! This is a good time to also remind your child what behavior you expect during the special events or outings.

Check Out This Video!

Creative Structure and Rules

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPem7khwoKk&t=9s>



References:

CDC: Parenting Essentials for Toddlers and Preschoolers
Video provided by:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)