

Back to School Routine!

As we now return to the school year, many of our children may be out of routine and this can affect how children start the school day. 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.

Children don't understand time in the same way as grown-ups. This can make school mornings a stressful time of day for families. However, staying calm and getting along in the morning will help you all feel positive about the day ahead. The most useful way to reduce morning chaos is to set up 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.

Here are some ideas to take some of the pressure out of school mornings – even if things don't always go smoothly!

- 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'.
- Give your children calm, clear instructions about what you want them to do, and follow up with specific praise as soon as they start to cooperate. You might need to remind younger children more often about what they're meant to be doing and when. Simple 'to do' checklists, even with pictures, can help.
- As your children get older and more capable, encourage them to do more for themselves – for example, an eight-year-old can get dressed on his own, make his own breakfast, and tidy up after himself. A five-year-old can do things like putting his lunch box in his bag.
- Cut down on distractions like television, tablets and other devices. Many families have a rule about no screen time in the morning. Think about leaving screens off, unless screen time is a special treat for being ready on time.
- 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.
- Make it fun – for example, try our 'Beat the buzzer' game to encourage your child to be ready on time.

