

Toronto District School Board Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Services from the Special Education and Inclusion Department

Daily Routines and Transitions

Creating and establishing daily routines helps all families get through the day. At school, having a structured schedule for school helps students know where they are going and what is expected of them during the day. The same benefits of a schedule are also true for the home environment.

Create a consistent routine for your children that works for you and your family. This way, children have an understanding of what they should be doing and when, and it also helps them get it done.

Daily mini- routines can include:

- Getting ready in the morning.
- Meal times.
- Chores.
- Bedtimes routines, including sleep.

Visual Schedules

Once a routine is established, a good way to ensure that it is followed is the use of a **visual schedule**. This is beneficial for everyone in the home. Visual Schedules help to break down the routine and guides children to transition smoothly from one activity or task to another and know what is coming up next. Sometimes it is hard to stop playing with a favourite toy or start getting ready for bed, but following along a visual schedule can help support a child who is struggling with transitions.



A visual schedule is like a “to-do” list for a child. It builds independence and provides a sense of responsibility.

Strategies for Transitions and Building Routines

First/Then:

Using a simple “first/then” strategy can also help a child when moving from one activity to another. Ideally, the less preferred activity; (i.e. as a weekly chore) must be completed “first”. The motivating more preferred activity, (i.e. such as watching TV) is “then”.

Transition Objects:

Another helpful tool to build routines can be the use of a transition object. This is a certain toy or tool that helps a child move from one activity to another. For example, a bedtime book can help a child get into bed, or “setting the table” for mealtimes.

Countdowns:

One of the most popular and frequently used strategies to help children transition through routines is a countdown. Timers or a simple countdown from ten can cue a transition and help reduce unwanted behaviors that can often occur when a child is not quite ready to move on.

Developing and establishing daily routines is essential for self-regulation. Routines help us all to create a calming predictability and flow in our daily lives. Try out the above strategies as you start with building one routine at a time into your day.

Disclaimer: All activities should be completed with adult supervision. It is okay if your child gravitates towards certain activities and avoids others. Although most of these activities are meant to help calm a body down, for some individuals, it might energize their system. This is not individualized therefore some activities may not be appropriate for your child.