

Refresh Your Morning Routine: Tips To Get Out The Door On Time

1. Establish a night-time routine.

A good morning starts the night before. Children thrive on consistency, so implement a predictable bedtime routine at the same time every night, such as a relaxing bath, story, song, then into bed. Sticking to the same ritual each evening will comfort your child and make it easy to start winding down. Turn off any screens 60 minutes before bed, as these can interfere with restful sleep.

2. Prepare the night before.

Minimizing the number of things you have to do in the morning is a simple way to streamline your routine. With each child, lay out appropriate clothing for the next day, prepare lunches (children can help if you do this before dinner), and even prepare breakfast! Completing these tasks with your children will give them opportunities for input and thus a sense of ownership over their day.

3. Give yourself plenty of time.

Waking up at the last minute leaves everyone feeling frazzled and sets a negative tone for the day. Ideally, you should aim to get up before your children, so that you are dressed and ready to go by the time they wake up. You will feel calm, and that helps everyone to experience a more peaceful morning.

4. Stay organized.

One way to avoid a frantic last-minute search for backpacks and shoes is to keep all of these items in the same place. Establish a cubby area near the doorway that has a place for shoes, backpacks, coats, and mittens. Make sure it is attractive and child-sized to promote independence and a desire to keep it organized. Set the expectation that this is where your children should neatly store their things, and uphold it. If the cubbies get a little messy during the week, take some time with your children to help organize this space.

5. Use the clock.

In this busy world, children can feel rushed around without any understanding of why, and this can be the cause of a lot of tantrums and power struggles. Explain to your child that everyone needs to be out of the house at a certain time. Show them that time on the clock; you can even mark it with stickers to help your child remember. Sand timers can be a very effective visual for younger children. In the morning, point to the clock and say, "Oh, look! We have 10 minutes left before we need to leave. What should we be doing now? Maybe putting on our coats and shoes would be a good idea." Listen to your child's input and involve them in the process. That way, the morning routine feels more like a team effort, rather than a competition with the parents doing all of the heavy lifting!

Mornings don't need to feel like a battle- the key is to be prepared, give yourself plenty of time, and to allow your children to be independent in their routines. Yes, it may be faster in the moment to dress them yourself and rush them out the door. But that conveys the message to each child that "You are not capable." Offering your children some ownership over their morning will enable a more peaceful routine for everyone. Remember that this time of day signals separation from parents and home, so it is helpful to talk about what activities the day will include and how exciting it will be to share our day's activities when everyone is together again.