

What is a Routine?

Routine is a type of memory formed by repeatedly carrying out regular tasks in the same or similar way. For example, when getting dressed we learn to put socks on before shoes so we don't have to think about the process every time we get dressed.



Why are Routines good for us:

Routines are less demanding on working memory, attention and higher executive functioning so they free up physical and brain energy for more demanding, irregular and new situations.

When a movement is repeated over time a long-term muscle memory is created for that task eventually allowing it to be repeated without conscious effort. One example might be when you make a cup of tea and you follow an 'automatic' routine without conscious awareness because it is such a familiar activity.



Why should we use Routines at home?

To reduce arguments and family stressors - when everyone is familiar with a routine, it helps limit the chance of 'melt downs' particularly at stressful times such as Monday mornings!

Routines help establish roles and sense of acceptable behaviour for all family members. For example, Mum makes the sandwiches but each child is responsible for putting their lunch box in their own school bag.



Where to start with Routines

- Whole family involvement - ensure everyone is 'on board' and agrees their role in a routine
- Using visual aids -try picture schedules or a colourful list on the kitchen wall
- One at a time - choose one area of your family life to start with
- Be realistic - new systems take time to become familiar, keep trying and routines become just that...routine!

MORNING ROUTINE	EVENING ROUTINE
 Eat breakfast	 Pack school bag
 Brush teeth	 Toys away
 Get dressed	 Tidy bedroom
 Socks on	 Dirty clothes away
 PJs under pillow	 Brush teeth
 Make bed	 Tidy bathroom
 Tidy room	 15 min reading
 Pack school bag	 Sweet dreams

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Some useful sites with information on developing routines:

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/family_routines_how_and_why_they_work.html/context/312

http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/parent/mod6/family_routine_guide.pdf