

## HELP YOUR CHILD HAVE A HAPPY MORNING



Mornings can be challenging for parents of young children as they scramble to get everyone up and out the door. The key to a more comfortable start to the day is a well-planned morning routine. A routine can limit challenging behaviors such as crying, whining, and tantrums, while helping your child learn important skills, develop confidence, and become more independent. Here are some tips to help your family establish a morning routine.

### Try This at Home

- Use a visual schedule — Young children can understand your expectations better when you use photos, clipart, or familiar objects to show them. Visit [challengingbehavior.org](http://challengingbehavior.org) and search for “visual schedules” to learn how to create your own visual schedule.
- Set a consistent bedtime — Your child may have difficulty waking up in the morning because he isn’t getting enough sleep at night. Establishing a set bedtime (and sticking to it!) usually helps children sleep better.
- Plan ahead for the next day — Do things the same way each night before bed. For example, lay out

your child’s clothes and pack her backpack before using the visual schedule to talk about tomorrow’s activities.

- Offer your child choices — When a child has options, he feels a sense of independence that can be very helpful. For example, “First you can get dressed and then you have a choice: Would you like cereal for breakfast or pancakes?”
- Include some bonding time — Your child will feel more calm and comfortable when you take a few minutes to snuggle or read a short story together.
- Offer encouragement — Praise your child when she completes a specific task. For example,

“You got up all by yourself today. That’s wonderful! Now you have time to play with your toys.”

### Practice at School

Most teachers understand the importance of a set routine for young children. When students know what they should be doing now, and what’s coming next, they feel less anxious and more enthusiastic about participating. Specific activities may change but the routine does not, and this helps children be more comfortable and more confident.

### The Bottom Line

Think of the morning routine as a daily opportunity to build a positive relationship with your child and enable her to practice important skills such as dressing, bathing, and grooming. Start the day with a positive morning routine and you’ll be setting the tone for the entire day.

*\*This article is adapted from the Backpack Connection Series of tip sheets developed by The Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI). Visit [challengingbehavior.org](http://challengingbehavior.org) to explore available resources.*