

**Norland  
Know-Hows**

**Establishing a  
routine**



## Establishing a routine

We have collated some hints and tips below to help support your practice and to share with the parents you are working with. We hope you find them useful!

The definition of a routine: a sequence of events regularly followed.

We have been told during these challenging and uncertain times that establishing a routine can be beneficial to our health and wellbeing. Our brains thrive on predictability, because then they do not have to work as hard to keep us feeling safe and secure.

This is especially true for children, because a routine can help them feel safe and help them orientate themselves throughout the day. Being able to predict events can be comforting and helps us to be more 'in the moment', as we are not worrying about what is happening next.

Routines for babies are much written about, and there are many theories out there about the best ways to approach instigating one. This fact sheet is going to consider young children, now at home, whose normal routine of going to school or nursery has been disrupted.

### Here are some tips:

1. Think about the important stuff first. What time does your child generally wake up? How much sleep do they need? When are their mealtimes and bedtimes? Consider the healthy habits you wish to encourage, such as brushing teeth and washing hands. This will form the template for your routine. It is easier to follow your child's natural rhythm.
2. Now make a list of other things you want to fit into your and your child's day. If your child is old enough, include them in your planning so that they have a voice within the process.
3. Do not worry too much about timings, as these can be flexible – it is the order that you do things that is more important, as it is this bit which helps your child predict what is happening next and helps them feel secure.
4. It might be too difficult or unsettling to do all at once, so you might want to introduce the routine gradually.
5. Give your child time to move from one part of the routine to another via a five-minute warning, playing music or singing a specific song in order to indicate a transition – this gives your child time to adjust and prepare.
6. You could use symbols, objects or pictures as a prop/timeline so that your child can see where they are within the routine and see what is next – especially while it is new.
7. Think about how you deal with change yourself – it can affect our behaviour and children are no different. It can be scary and challenging, but a routine can help us all with this. You are always a role model for your child, as how you cope will give them a narrative for their own approach.

8. Remember to try to make the routine fun. It is meant to be a positive thing – not a list of chores to be completed. Give any new plan time to work – be consistent. Do not worry about adapting or changing it if needed, but do this in a structured way, preparing your child for the change and involving them in the process either by talking through what will be changing, asking for suggestions about what you can do differently or giving them a choice between two options. You could also write the plan for the routine together – you could write, and the child draws. This will help your child to feel really involved, and they may be able to use their own pictures as a useful prompt or reminder.

*“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”*

— Arthur Ashe

This information is intended to provide guidance only. It is not exhaustive and should not be seen as a substitute for updating or enhancing your knowledge by completing training or a CPD course on the subject.