



ASSOCIATION FOR SPECIAL
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Special Connection

BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS 8.9.23



Dear Families

School will be starting soon. No one likes rushing around in the morning. And for families with kids who learn and think differently, the dash from morning wake-up to leaving for

school can be extra stressful. Your child might have trouble following a schedule, finding things, or coping with a jarring alarm clock. Try these tips to streamline school morning routines from an article " 8 ways to make school morning routines easier" from [understood.org](https://www.understood.org).

1. Start the night before.

No one likes rushing around in the morning. And for families with kids who learn and think differently, the dash from morning wake-up to leaving for school can be extra stressful. Your child might have trouble following a schedule, finding things, or coping with a jarring alarm clock. Try these tips to streamline school morning routines.

After your child is in bed, give yourself time to make lunches and snacks. If you have breakfast as a family, set the breakfast table. Choose your own outfit for the next day, too, and pack what you'll need.

2. Give yourself time in the morning.

If your child needs more time to manage the morning routine, it makes sense that *you* will, too. Wake up a little earlier than your child. Give yourself enough time to eat breakfast, drink coffee, exercise, or do whatever helps you get in the zone for the day.

Leave plenty of time to help your child get ready. Try not to be racing around to get yourself ready at the same time. This will lower the stress level for both of you.

3 Make wake-ups more relaxing.

How can you make early mornings less of a rude awakening? Loud alarms can be jarring and start the morning with an unneeded jolt (especially for kids with sensory challenges).

Set your child's alarm to play a favorite song. Try waking your child up with lots of snuggles or a favorite breakfast. A more pleasant wake-up doesn't mean it has to be longer.

4. Follow a routine.

Make every day as predictable as you can. Follow the same routine before and after school. It can look something like this: *Wake up, wash face, eat breakfast, get dressed, brush teeth, go over the day's schedule, leave for school.* A picture schedule can be extra helpful for kids who struggle with reading.

5. Stay organized.

Designate spots for school supplies, sports gear, coats, and jackets. This way, your child always knows where to look for things when you're halfway out the door. Plastic containers or labeled baskets can keep items within easy view, which makes it simpler to look for things in the morning.

6 Stick with the clock.

Make sure there are clocks “in your face” around the house. Put them in your child’s room, the bathroom, the kitchen — even the hallway. Older kids can also wear a watch. By making time more visible, you’ll help teach your child how to manage time. And it’ll make it clear that being on time is important. Give manageable countdowns, like “At 7:25, it’ll be time to put your shoes on.”

7. Do a “double-check.”

Have your child check and re-check to make sure everything’s packed *before* leaving the house. Younger kids can come up with a silly phrase or song to help remember all the books and materials they need each morning. Older kids can make lists of all the items needed for each day of the week. Post it where your child will see it often. And refer to it before leaving the house.

8. Reward your child.

This is a simple way to help your child get the most out of a smoother morning. For example, if your child gets ready for school and still has time to spare before it’s time to leave, play a quick game together or read a book. Starting the day with some cozy family bonding helps get everyone off to a solid start.

- Does your child complain about not wanting to go to school? Here are [ways to respond](#).
- Read one mom’s [solve for chaotic mornings](#).
- Get tips for helping kids [follow routines](#).

KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Prep food, outfits, and other items (your child’s and yours) the night before.
- Try to give yourself extra time in the morning so it doesn’t get stressful.
- Use checklists and picture schedules to help everyone stay on track.



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