



Learning independence

Daily routines

Managing daily routines helps children to develop independence and perseverance.

Daily routines are a part of everyday family life. They help children to develop the skills they need to be a valued part of their family. Over time, children gradually learn to manage routines more independently.

Learning through routines

It may take many months for children to develop skills for managing routines such as dressing themselves, matching buttons to buttonholes, putting on shoes, tidying away toys or setting the table. As they keep trying, children learn to persevere.

Becoming familiar with daily routines also enables children to make choices about their day, and organise themselves and their belongings. When children help with routines or daily chores like feeding pets or watering the garden, they feel pride in themselves, develop a sense of responsibility, and learn about their world.

However, it is not only the 'doing' that helps to enrich children's learning but also the talking together, exchanging ideas and generally 'sharing' during the experience.

Supporting learning

It is important to have an adult close by if help, advice or encouragement is needed. Feeling secure gives children the confidence to try new challenges and learn new skills.

Most children enjoy helping with household chores but need to work alongside an adult or at least have an adult pop in occasionally to prompt, guide and help monitor their interest.

Working and talking together affords parents an opportunity to truly share their home life with their children, and to use the potential of daily routines to enrich their children's early learning.

Getting organised

Children feel safe and confident to explore the indoor and outdoor environments when spaces are created for them that are familiar and welcoming.

Supporting your child

- Invite your child to share their ideas about setting up their learning spaces.
- Make time to talk with your child about changes to their routine and environment.

- Negotiate with your child about the spaces to use for different activities.
- Talk with your child about plans for new play experiences to encourage them to feel enthusiastic about learning.

Managing spaces for learning activities

- Spread sheets or blankets on the floor to define a particular space, or protect tiles and carpet from paint or playdough.
- Use small child-sized table and chairs, your dining table or outdoor table to set up activities such as drawing, puzzles and craft.
- Dramatic play spaces can be created under a table, using chairs, sheets or a blanket. A large cardboard box can be cut and transformed into a car, rocket, house or shop. Smaller boxes can be used as a pretend oven, fridge or computer.
- A small washing line/wire drying rack can be used in an art area to hang artwork up to dry. Coat or hat racks can hang paint aprons or shirts.
- Create an easel by tying string through cardboard and hang it on the fence outside.
- Create an art folder to place artwork inside by stapling together two pieces of cardboard.
- Create an 'art wall' to display your child's artwork.
- Hang artwork from a curtain rod/wire rod with pegs.

Create a space for children to feel that they belong, are actively engaged and able to learn and play.

Involving children in the organisation of resources helps them learn how to independently manage and organise the materials they need for learning.

Your child can learn and play more independently when spaces and materials are well organised. They can also pack away resources more easily. Inexpensive storage solutions can be created using everyday items found in your home such as plastic containers, cartons or boxes.

Ideas for storage

- Large plastic containers, cardboard boxes, baskets and shoe boxes can be used for storing many items.
- Plastic containers, cups, bases of cut-off milk containers/cartons, magazine holders, desk organisers/trays, pencil cases, envelopes and zip-lock bags can be used to store smaller items.
- Small squeeze bottles, ice-cream containers, yoghurt or margarine containers, cups or tins can be used to store art resources.
- Woven baskets or canvas shopping bags can be hung from hooks on the wall (e.g. to store dress up items).
- An old shoe rack or wicker basket can be used to store books.

- Shelves and cupboards can be used to store containers or baskets.
- Create 'activity boxes' (e.g. archive boxes) to hold materials not being used. Label and stack the boxes to save space and set-up time.

Encourage your child to look after their learning space

- Involve your child in setting up spaces and storing materials so that they know where items are kept.
- Try to store things at your child's level.
- Label the containers. Write the word and use a photo or picture on a piece of card and attach with clear contact to the container.

Time to pack up

While packing away, children are learning to become responsible, learning about ways to care for their belongings and respect their home and learning environment.

In the home environment, children may need to share their learning spaces with other family members. While it is important for children to have space to explore and play, they also need to understand that other family members have a right to use these spaces too.

When children have finished a play session or before meal break times, encourage them to pack away the materials they have used. It is also important to support children to persevere when trying something new for the first time. Encourage them to 'have a go' at tasks they might find challenging and praise them for their efforts.

Ways to encourage your child to help pack away

- Explain to your child that packing away helps them find what they need the next day, and keeps their home safe and tidy for other family members.
- Set clear rules and boundaries with your child about what you expect them to do when packing away.
- Break bigger tasks into smaller tasks.
- Give clear instructions.
- Suggest ways for your child to help other family members (e.g. keeping the space tidy, pack away things when they are finished, help with other chores in the home).

Children learn about independence, fairness and consideration when they help to pack away.

For further information

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