

What Is It?

Classroom routines are consistent and predictable schedules with familiar activities across the day. Routines help children feel comfortable and confident in a new environment. They also provide children with clear expectations for appropriate behavior. Routines make the program day predictable by helping children understand what to expect and what is expected of them. Routines help minimize distractions and interruptions that reduce learning opportunities and disrupt child engagement in early learning activities.

When to Use It

- At the beginning of class (greeting adults, putting items in cubbies, sitting on carpet squares, etc.).
- During learning and play activities.
- At mealtime, such as snack and lunch.
- When preparing children for procedures throughout the day (e.g., fire drill, walking to recess).

Steps to Implementation / How to Do It

<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Create a daily routine for the beginning of the child's day. Include procedures for greeting adults, putting items in cubbies or other assigned areas, and starting first activity. Have children practice procedures through example and role play.
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Create routines for activities like circle time, mealtime, or table time. Discuss expected behaviors with the children and ask them to provide input. Create a list of behavioral expectations for learning at the table, during circle, transitioning, using the restroom, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Create a daily routine for the end of the day (cleaning up toys, getting coats and backpacks, lining up at the door, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Create a routine for other classroom procedures including fire drills and transitioning to recess.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Keep routines consistent and predictable so children know what is expected of them at all times. Discuss procedures with the children and other adults in the classroom and create a visual list of routine expectations. Post this list where it is visible to the children. Refer to specific routine expectations and prompt children to engage in the expected behaviors when necessary.
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Help children transition between routines by introducing a signal that indicates an upcoming transition. Also, verbally and/or visually warn children prior to changes.

Example

Mr. Salvador is a preschool teacher preparing for the upcoming year. He wants to establish a set of routines early in the year to ensure children understand what's expected of them throughout each school day. Mr. Salvador writes down a list of common classroom routines he expects to use and checks to see if they are developmentally appropriate for his incoming 4-year-olds. He then creates a visual list of what to do at the beginning of the day, during common preschool activities, and at the end of the day. He posts the visual list of routine expectations on the front wall of the classroom.

On the first day of class, Mr. Salvador introduces the children to various classroom routines. He has the children practice classroom routines by acting out scenarios of what to do in class. Mr. Salvador asks the children to think of other examples of routines and discusses the importance of having routines in the classroom. Throughout the year, Mr. Salvador provides lots of behavior-specific praise when children successfully complete routines. He refers to the visual list at the front of the classroom when he needs to provide additional support to children during a routine.

How to Increase Effectiveness

- Create and display a daily visual schedule that all adults and children can easily reference.
- Post other written and visual routines in visible locations around the room.
- Keep expectations of the routines brief and understandable.
- Teach classroom routines at the beginning of the year, after breaks, or when children are unsuccessful within a certain routine.
- Provide frequent positive descriptive feedback for following class procedures.
- Prepare children in advance for changes in class routines.
- Periodically reflect on routine practices and expectations to determine their effectiveness. Consider simplifying or modifying routines if you notice children frequently wandering around, asking what to do, or using materials inappropriately.
- Take data on the number of times children need prompts during different routines to determine if any need to be modified or retaught.

Resources

Ostrosky, M.M., Jung, E.Y., Hemmeter, M.L., & Thomas, D. (2007). [Helping children understand routines and classroom schedules](#).

Office of Head Start. (2020). [The importance of schedules and routines](#).