

## Daily routines

It is important that you put some thought into your daily routines. The EYFS states that each child's routine must be shared with their parents (requirement 3.72) so, once written, you must give parents a copy – by email maybe or printed depending on how each family prefers to receive information about their child from you.

There are a number to things to consider when you are writing children's routines including –

- Parents wishes for their child's time with you;
- Children's needs to eat and sleep or rest;
- Your own routines through the day eg collecting children from school or fitting in meal times before pre-school outings;
- Availability of local outings eg toddler groups and soft play;
- EYFS requirements to offer a balance of adult led, adult guided and child initiated learning and play through the day;
- EYFS requirements for offering daily outside play;
- Activities you want to include every day such as a singing and reading session.

**Step 1** – make a time frame for your typical day and add in anything that you always do eg...

### Monday - morning

Before 8	Children arrive and breakfast
8 – 830	
830 – 9	School outing
9 – 1030	
1030 – 1045	Morning snack
1045 – 12	

### Afternoon

12 – 1230	Lunch
1230 – 3	
300 – 330	School outing
330-345	Afternoon snack
345 – 445	
445 – 515	Tea time
515 – home time	

This gives you the basic framework for your routine – now you can start to flesh it out.

**Step 2** – go back to the list of things parents / children / you need to include in the routine ... and fill in some of the gaps, personalising the routine for each child! Where possible, allow time for uninterrupted play for all the children every day plus a stretch of time when you and each child sit together and do something the child wants to do or you want to teach them.

To comply with the EYFS, free play needs to be balanced with adult led activities which support and enhance learning...

- Adult led sessions – learning opportunities / activities you plan and set up for the children to do.
- Adult guided play – times when you play alongside the children and guide / model play.
- Free play – times when the children play their own games, with an interested adult nearby to support them if needed by eg providing more resources, talking them through a conflict, helping them to do something etc.
- Group times – daily song and dance and reading sessions. We use teddies, dolls and other props during these sessions to help concentration and we have a routine which the children understand and can easily follow. We keep a folder of songs and rhymes on the shelf so we are never short of inspiration and we plan reading sessions the night before so we know what we are intending to do (this is flexible if a child has a new interest we want to incorporate into the session).
- Circle time - we do not find traditional 'circle time' activities work with our children because they are such different ages, but that doesn't stop us from using circle time ideas during our group times – we just keep them very short and focus on what the children are interested in and need to learn next.

**Step 3** – don't forget the little details!

Writing your routine is the ideal time to think about the parts of the day that can be used to support children's learning such as –

- Arrival – the children can put their coats and bags on a hook or shelf and take off their shoes before saying goodbye to parents. This promotes self-care and independence.
- Self-registration – can be used to support self-awareness and mark making.
- Weather watch – to teach children about the seasons, time of year, weather outside, day and date etc.
- Tidy up time – make sure children have spaces to put their pictures away to take home and know where to hang aprons and put models if they want to come back to them later. Build in time for chatting – talk to the children about what they have been doing, what they have enjoyed and how they feel about the session they have just taken part in. Make tidying up easy – label boxes or put contents pictures on shelves where the children can see them. Tidy up time covers lots of areas of learning including communication and language (listening and understanding as well as speaking) and independence (PSED).
- Hand washing – daft as it sounds hand washing routines can take a long time every day if you care for 2, 3 or more children. You need to build in time to talk to the children about why they are washing hands and to allow them independence as they learn to use soap, wash between their fingers, dry their hands etc. This teaches independence and self-help skills.

- Cleaning up – children are great at helping to tidy up when they have been shown how to do it and they can wipe tables before and after snack and serve each other at lunch, but there are some jobs that only the adult can do through the day. During these times you need to think about what the children are doing and how you ensure they are safe, learning and always within your sight and hearing.
- Departure – it can take a long time to see 3 or 4 children off the premises complete with the right bags and coats and a kind word to their parents. Think carefully about what the other children are doing during these times if you work by yourself – they might need some supervision or quiet activities to help them cope if they are upset because their parents have not arrived yet.

When writing your routines, remember –

- Children cannot be expected to sit for lengths of time, so keep your group planned sessions short, interesting and meaningful.
- Planning must be flexible to allow for unexpected learning opportunities.
- Children might change their minds about what they want to do so again you need to be flexible.
- While it is a requirement to offer daily outside play you do not need doors open all day – in fact, this has been noted as detrimental to learning in some provisions. When you all go outside, you need to think about what learning opportunities you are offering – putting on coats and shoes (getting dressed independently), talking about what you might do (speaking and listening), using large scale toys (physical development – moving), offering mark making with chalk or painting (physical development – handling), growing plants, watching the weather or finding out about nature (understanding the world) etc.

Remember to come back to your routines regularly and make sure they are meeting the needs of the children. If you take on a new child, think about their routine needs and how well they slot into the children you already have in your provision – do you need to make any changes? Your routines must be flexible – but experts tell us that children thrive when they know what is happening next so try and keep to them as much as possible.

Children might like a visual routine – you can make it on cards and hang them over a radiator if you want to remove everything at the end of the day. Visual routines, featuring words and pictures of what is happening next, are an excellent way of supporting children's wellbeing through the day.

**Note** - gold members of Childcare.co.uk will be able to access a Continuous Provision Plan for daily routines in the member area of the website from June - <http://www.childcare.co.uk/information/childminder-plus>.