Rhythms, Routines & Schedules

How to Simplify Life with Kids

20+ Free Printables

By Rachel Norman & Lauren Tamm

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Plus 20+ Free Printables to
Get You Started!

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We cannot guarantee that these schedules will work well for your child. This is our experience and our opinion. You should draw your own conclusions about the information we share with you. We have used information from other books, websites, and personal experience to aid us in writing this book.

For our kids who make each day a unique parenting adventure.

For our husbands who support us each and every day.

For all the moms who are looking to simplify life with kids. You are among friends!

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Foreword

I love routine! What can I say? I was a teacher, and now I am a mom to four young children. Routine isn't just helpful for me, but it is helpful for our kids. It lets them know what is going to come next, what they can expect and what our day will look like. Routines help to eliminate temper tantrums, mood swings, and chaos, in most cases.

I find that by embracing a rhythm and routine with our kids, our days flow more smoothly. I walk them through our routine at the beginning of each day. They know that after breakfast, they get dressed for school and make their beds. It isn’t anything that we need to go back and forth on, because it is simply part of their routine. Our routines offer them a sense of security because they know what comes next and they feel confident in it. Plus, it gives us time to connect, because as part of our routine, we snuggle at

night while we read books. They look forward to this, knowing it is a special part of the end of our day.

I love this book because it really showcases how beneficial rhythms, routines and schedules will be for your family and you will learn exactly what you need to do to make it work. I can't stress enough how great this will be to your family!

— Becky Mansfield, Your Modern Family

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Introduction

I was shocked when I learned I was pregnant with my firstborn. I had plans that didn't yet include a baby, and much to my surprise, I found myself preparing to be a stay-at-home mom. We were in the middle of moving countries (continents even!) so I had all the time in the world to do prenatal videos and read books. I read and read and read, and one of the most common threads found in various types of parenting books was this: find a routine that works for you and stick with it.

So that's exactly what I did. The first few months of my daughter's life were stressful for us adults, but we still managed to maintain a good routine. In fact, I

found motherhood such an enjoyable experience that just one year later, I gave birth to a son. 15 months later, I gave birth to another son. And 16 months after that, I gave birth to a third son. Call me crazy (I know my family does), but the reason I'm able to parent four children four years of age and under is because we have good routines.

Our routines aren't set in stone and may change from month to month, but it's the number one thing I suggest to new mothers: get a good routine. It helps children sleep better, cope better with changes, and even behave better. Quite simply, it's the backbone of our days. If you are wondering what type of routine may work for you, this book is the place. We hope you find a routine that works well for your family and you reap the benefits daily.

—Rachel, A Mother Far from Home

During my first pregnancy, I did everything I could to prepare. From books and classes to seeking advice from other moms, I wanted to empower myself with as much knowledge as possible. Even so, in the first few months of my son's life, I found myself struggling

far more than I imagined. I quickly discovered that taking care of a baby isn't as easy as it looks.

Something changed as soon as my son turned 6 weeks old though—we found our rhythm, we developed a good schedule, and we never looked back. Two years later as my husband and I prepare for the birth of our second child, it's hard to imagine our life without rhythms, routines, and schedules. It simplifies our life, facilitates easier parenting, and makes for less stressful days.

Some may argue that regular routines and schedules stifle your life. That it's not realistic to live daily life by an approximate schedule without feeling too restricted or confined. Personally, I find the exact opposite to be true. The schedule brings freedom. Because the schedule offers predictability in our lives, it's easy to find times during the day that are perfect for outings, errands, and of course, sleep.

Schedules, routines, and rhythms are so empowering to our family that I'm passionate about sharing our success in order to help others. It is my hope that through this book, you will find a rhythm that works well for your family, simplifies your life, and brings

more freedom and predictability to your parenting journey than you ever imagined.

—Lauren, The Military Wife and Mom

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Getting Started With a Good Schedule

The benefits of a routine are undeniable. You know what to expect. The kids know what to expect, and daily life runs smoother. Whether you are more structured or embrace unscheduled time, you can still enjoy a daily routine or rhythm that can transform your home from one of chaos to one of calm.

What's a Routine?

Routine can mean:

- Regularity and consistency within your day
- A series of "one thing happens before another" actions

- Using the clock as a guide (whether general or specific) for the day's activities

Routine need not mean:

- Letting the clock be your master
- Always doing the same things every day
- Throwing spontaneity out the window

The major events of the day make up the foundation of the routine. For little ones, this includes sleep, eating, and play. From infants to preschoolers, these still remain the most important activities. If you are creating a routine from scratch, start with times of your choosing for the basics, then add in all the extras.

Benefits of a Routine

The benefits of routine are widely documented and accepted. In fact, many successful business people and entrepreneurs will go so far as to say that eating the same exact thing every morning for breakfast is part of their routine. Why? They want to save all their decision-making bandwidth for more important daily tasks. While we don't need to be that rigid, this example serves as a reminder that a routine can allow

us to save much of our energy for the important things.

Routines are beneficial for children because they:

- Give a sense of security and stability
- Help develop self-discipline
- Eliminate power battles
- Breed cooperation (children like to do what's next when they know what it is)
- Help the family find a good sleep rhythm

A Helpful Rhythm When Getting Started

One of the rhythms shared frequently throughout this book is the eat, wake, sleep rhythm.

What does the eat, wake, sleep rhythm mean exactly?

This simply means that when your child wakes from sleep, he or she will eat shortly thereafter. Then he will be awake for a bit and play. After that, he will rest again. The cycle repeats throughout the day as needed. The child does not always have a period of rest between each eat and play cycle, especially as he

gets older and requires less daytime rest. This rhythm is common during infancy and the early toddler years, then it fades naturally over time as the child enters the school-aged years.

Why is this rhythm helpful?

Very young children—babies and toddlers—have the most energy to eat a good meal immediately after resting. Following the meal, kids can play and have fun and be silly. After a period of time, kids rest. The idea is to offer young kids the greatest opportunity to take a good full meal and fill their bellies when they have the most energy. This rhythm also helps young kids avoid eating and falling asleep mid-meal, only to wake up hungry a short period of time later. Overall, this rhythm helps encourage a more peaceful home with well-fed and well-rested kids.

Knowing Your Child's Sleep Needs

Learning and understanding how much sleep your child needs, based on averages for his age, can help immensely when creating a routine and rhythm. We created this chart to help you determine what your child may need.

(Note: The Sleep Averages by Age Chart is included in the book, and as a launch week special it is also included as an additional free printable! Sleep needs are based on averages.)

For the Breastfeeding Mom

It's important to make note that if you are a breastfeeding mom with an young infant, you will want to have a well-established milk supply before starting a routine or schedule with your baby. After you pick up a nice rhythm and are ready for a schedule, the times are always approximate and intended to remain flexible. Always feed your baby on demand when needed, paying close attention to growth spurts and hunger cues. If your child is truly hungry, you never need to delay a feeding.

If you are uncomfortable with using the clock to set the flow for your day, pay close attention to the sample rhythms that are flexible depending upon your baby's own habits. See Chapters 13 and 14 for daily rhythms without set times and see Section 3 for printable daily rhythms.