

Developing Rules and Routines

The Benefits

Routines and predictable schedules help give children (and adults) a sense of security as they know what to expect and what is expected of them. This is especially true for those who are feeling anxious. Those on the Autistic Spectrum may also find having a predictable routine particularly helpful.

Clear and predictable household rules also help children feel safe and secure and reduce unhelpful or unwanted behaviour.

Household Rules

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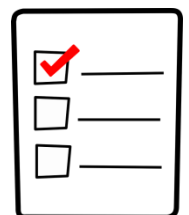
It is helpful to think of **five 'golden' rules** that you have, or would like to have, for your household. This would be rules to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of your children e.g. seatbelts must be worn at all times, children can play on the garden but must not stray out of the gate, no hitting allowed. In school, we have our golden rules so the children will be used to this idea.

- **Involve your children in deciding the rules** as they will be more likely to follow the rules. Make it a fun activity for the family.
- **Write down and display your rules somewhere so that everyone can see them.** This will remind everyone of what the rules are. Ask your children to get creative and make a colourful, interesting display of your household rules.



- **It is important that these are household rules**, not just rules for the children. For example, if your rule is no mobile phones at the table then this should apply to adults as well as children. Of course, rules about the specific bedtime for different children would vary although a general rule could be; 'start your bedtime routine one hour before bedtime'

- **Try not to have too many rules.** You and your child will not be able to remember lots of rules. This means that they will not be able to follow them all and you as a parent will not be able to follow up with praise if they do follow a rule, or reminders, warnings and consequences if they do not.



- **Don't have unnecessary rules.** Give your children the freedom to make choices for themselves where you can e.g. let children decide what t-shirt to wear.

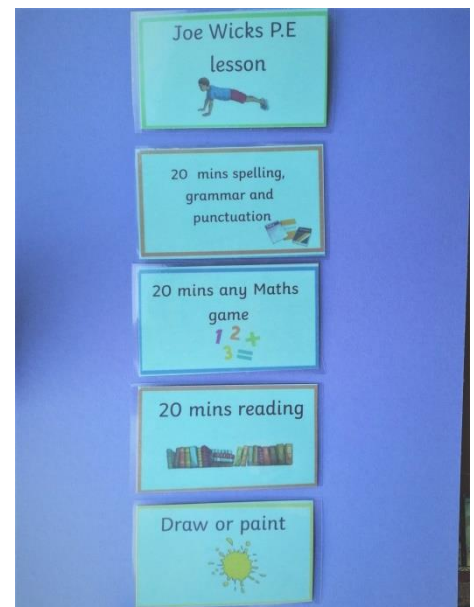
Routines:

- **Bedtimes and mornings** are often difficult times for parents and having a structured routine can be really helpful. Children and grown-ups know exactly what needs to be done.



- **While schools are closed** to most children it is a really good idea to have some structure and routine for your day at home. There is no need to try to plan every hour of the day but some structure to your day will be helpful for everyone. Build in time for going in the garden, exercise, games, creativity and relaxation as well as some learning activities. Try to keep to regular bedtimes and times for waking up and restrict the amount of screen time. Start a winding-down routine around one hour before your child's bedtime, including comforting events such as a bath, drink and snack, story-time, or quiet play. Avoid stimulating television programmes, computer games or active play in this time.

- **Once your routine is established** you will find yourself having to give less instruction and commands. Remember to give your child lots of praise and attention for EACH little job they do. You could use stickers and small rewards to motivate your child to use the routine.
- **Having a visual reminder** of your routine is a great idea, and again, your children can be involved in making it. A simple but effective idea is have cards showing each task on the fridge which your children can take off or move once they have done each task. Enjoy getting creative with this.



When we return to school, we will be hosting a one-off workshop about establishing rules and routines at home. Look out for details of this when we return to school.