



Routines Summary

Why Routines?

Routines not only help your family move through the day smoothly and on time, they can have a significant impact on your teen's success. Though your teen may desire more independence and flexibility with their daily routines, the structure and predictability in the morning, after school, at dinnertime, and at bedtime can promote healthy habits and offer a foundation of stability during the many changes they are undergoing.

Tip These steps are done best when you and your teen are not tired or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and a healthy parenting relationship support these steps.

Step 1. Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- Ask questions to invite your teen into a dialogue with you:
 - *"What do you think is helpful about having routines?"*
 - *"How does having a routine make the day go smoother?"*
 - *"How much sleep do you need to be successful?"*
 - *"When and how does homework typically get accomplished each night?"*
 - *"When and how do we prepare for and eat family dinner together?"*
 - *"What do we do after we wake up to prepare for the school day?"*
- Be sure you acknowledge that your young adult is not a child anymore, and you want to coordinate with their schedule at their new young adult level.
- Discuss challenges. Ask: *"Seems like getting up on time is challenging. How can we address that to make getting up easier so that you can do it independently?"*
- Write your plan. Make sure your teen is the one who is writing down the checklist or plan (it doesn't have to be perfect). Go for simple. Post your plan in a visible location. Refer to it as a reminder during the morning routine.

Tip Because teens are asserting their independence, you may want to work alongside them creating your own adult morning checklist modeling while also empowering them to design their own.

Trap Be sure you create your plan at a calm time. Don't create your plan when you are either in the routine itself, are hungry or tired, or have time pressures.

Tip Make sure your teen knows the facts about required sleep at various ages. According to the National Sleep Foundation, 14-17-year-olds require between 8-10 hours of sleep per night, and 18-25-year-olds require between 7-9 hours per night.¹

Tip To avoid battles about getting enough sleep, take a weekend and agree upon a reasonable bedtime to test needed sleep. Make sure it's not a particularly stressful day for your teen since sleep can be altered by stress. Allow your teen to wake up naturally. Then, count the hours. How long did they sleep? That's likely the exact amount of hours they require each night.

Tip Did you know that doctors and medical professionals use checklists as the easiest, best way to keep track of daily processes they have to go through to serve patients?²

Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Consider: “If my teen left our house and lived away from us today, would they know how to do a load of laundry, how to pay for utilities and rent, and prepare three healthy meals a day?” Thinking about what tasks they’ll need to be able to do when they are on their own can offer you guidance on areas to step up their responsibilities. When you’ve identified those areas, you’ll need to teach them to do those new tasks.
- Because teens and young adults are glimpsing a future without you, they may appreciate your willingness to work alongside them and provide guidance and support using interactive modeling.³
 - Say what you will model and why.
 - Model the behavior.
 - Ask your teen what they noticed.
 - Invite your teen to model.
 - Ask what they noticed with their own modeling.
 - Practice together.
 - Provide specific feedback starting with strengths using “*I notice...*” statements.

Tip If you suspect that your 15-19-year-old might be resistant to being taught a new task by you, then this can be done subtly. Just working side by side on a project and chatting about what you are doing actually models the behaviors, promotes reflection on what you’re doing, and helps transfer the skills to your teen.

Tip Your 15-19-year-old is more interested in considering their independent future so use this as a motivator! They may have fears about managing on their own. So, your support and guidance could actually help them feel more confident and capable. Make a priority of having a family dinner together at least once a week to connect despite busy schedules!

Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use “Show me...” statements. *“Show me how you prepare a meal for our family. I’m here to help if you need it.”*
- Recognize and appreciate effort by saying “I notice...” statements. *“I noticed how you made a plan to get enough sleep last night. I appreciate seeing your sense of responsibility in action!”*
- If there is part of a routine that is not working, talk with your child about ways that you might change your plan for it to work better. *“It seems you are struggling to wake up on time in the morning. Is there something you can do to help you get up on time? Could you go to bed a little earlier? Would moving your alarm clock away from the bed so you have to get up to turn it off help?”*
- Proactively remind in a gentle, non-public way: *“Don’t forget...”*

Tip The best way to turn around a misbehavior is by recognizing when and how your teen is making good choices or acting positively in similar circumstances. They need to learn what to do as well as what not to do.

Trap Don’t move on, nag, or do it for your teen. Be sure to assume that they will take their responsibilities seriously and accomplish them. If they don’t, then discuss it in the bigger picture. Allow them to face real world consequences and then discuss. Assure: *“I know you are capable, but you are not on time in the mornings. Have you heard from your teacher about being late?”* And ask, *“Can we talk about what’s happening? How can I support you in getting out on time?”*

Step 4. **Support** Your Teen’s Development and Success

- Ask key questions.
 - *“Are you all set with what you need to make dinner?”*
 - *“Do you need any help finishing up so that you can get to bed when you planned?”*
- Recognize effort by using “I notice” statements like, *“I notice how you started your homework right after school without me asking. That’s taking responsibility!”*
- Reflect on outcomes: *“Seems like you got to bed later than you hoped last night. Were you feeling tired today? Did you have a hard time paying attention in class?”*
- Apply logical consequences when needed.
- Stay engaged. Working together on particularly challenging times of the routine can help offer additional support and motivation for your teen when tough issues arise. Be sure to pose the challenge as a question and allow your teen to provide solutions.
- Engage in further practice. Create more opportunities to practice when the family has time together.

Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Notice when all is moving along smoothly. *“I notice you completed that major assignment on time. Yes! Excellent.”*
- Recognize small steps along the way. Find small ways your teen is making an effort and let them know you see them.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, after making a family meal everyone does the dishes together to make the task quick, and then head to the ice cream shop.

Tip Your teen is thinking ahead to the days when they'll be on their own. Comments that point out how they are acting in ways that are self-sufficient will help them see how contributing to your daily family life is also helping them achieve their personal goals.

References

1. National Sleep Foundation. National Sleep Foundation Recommends New Sleep Times. Retrieved on 7-25-18 at <https://sleepfoundation.org/press-release/national-sleep-foundation-recommends-new-sleep-times>
2. Gawande, A. (2009). *The Checklist Manifesto; How to Get Things Right*. NY, NY: Picador.
3. Wilson, M.B. (2012). *Interactive modeling; A powerful technique for teaching children*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.

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