

# **PERFECTION THE MORNING ROUTINE – HOW TO GET YOUR CHILD READY FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR**

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Most parents expect to offer lots of guidance with kindergartners, but the expectation for older kids is that they should move through the morning in a timely fashion.

Unfortunately, some children need remedial lessons for getting out the door on time without resistance.

When that first day arrives, think of yourself as the getting-out-the-door coach. You're right there helping with socks and shoes, putting toothpaste on toothbrushes, handing each child his backpack and lunch box as he walks out the door. As the days go by, you'll back off and give only verbal and visual cues: "It's time to get your socks on; I'll watch you do it. You did it all by yourself; good for you." By thoughtfully withdrawing your support, you give your children the opportunity to grasp hold of their responsibilities.

## ***Tips for Parents:***

- Explain how life is going to change. A week prior to the first day, offer a precise description of the morning routine: "I'll wake you up at 7 o'clock, you need to be dressed by 7:30 for breakfast. I expect you ready with your backpack, lunch and coat to walk out the door at 8 o'clock." Young children need practice. For some, a pictorial chart including each step really helps.
- Start getting kids in bed early. Begin a week before school gets underway. You can't force them to sleep, but you can see they're snuggled in bed looking at books.
- Get yourself up and ready first. If you work outside the home, this step is crucial. All goes more smoothly those first days when you're available to guide your children each step of the way.
- Give reminders. Most kids learn to move through the morning routine in a timely fashion. Others need reminders until high school graduation: "Son, I think you forgot to brush your teeth."
- State the obvious. "Your coat is on, now put on your shoes." Later, give one-word directives. Just say "shoes," or ask, "What are you supposed to do next?"
- Avoid yelling and harsh treatment. Negative ingredients can quickly become embedded in the routine. No parent likes sending their child out the door after a screaming match.

- Tack on an additional task. Once the morning schedule becomes routine, you can add an element: throwing dirty clothes in the hamper, making beds, putting together lunches.

Most children adjust to the new school year after a week, but if after a month your child resists getting up and going to school, it's time to evaluate why. Start by talking to your child's teacher.

Remember your goal: You want your children up and out the door on time, and to move securely through the school day so each can reach her academic potential. Ask yourself how you wish the school year to go, then ask yourself how you can help it happen.