

Routines Age 18 Summary

Why Routines?

Routines help your family move through the day smoothly and on time and can significantly impact 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 bedtime can promote healthy habits and offer a foundation of stability during the many changes they are undergoing.

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 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: *“It seems like getting up on time is challenging. How can we address that to make getting up easier so 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 empowering them to design their own.

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 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

- Consider: “If my teen left our house and lived away from us today, would they know how to do laundry, pay utilities and rent, and prepare three healthy meals daily?” 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. You’ll need to teach them to do those new tasks when you’ve identified those areas.
- 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 modeling
 - Practice together
 - Provide specific feedback starting with strengths using “*I notice...*” statements

Tip If you suspect that your 15-19-year-old might resist being taught a new task by you, then this can be done subtly. Working side by side on a project and chatting about what you are doing 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. Your support and guidance could 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 planned to get enough sleep last night. I appreciate seeing your sense of responsibility in action!*”
- If part of a routine is not working, talk with your teen about ways to change your plan for it to work better. “*It seems you are finding it challenging to wake up on time. 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 and what not to do.

Trap Be patient and avoid criticism. 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 them. 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

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 you can get to bed as planned?”*
- Recognize effort 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. Logical consequences should come soon after the negative behavior and need to be provided in a way that maintains a healthy relationship. Rather than punishment, a consequence is about supporting the learning process. First, recognize your feelings and practice a calm down strategy. Not only is this good modeling, but when you control your emotions and feel calm, you can provide logical consequences that fit the behavior. Second, invite your teen to discuss the expectations established in Step 2 for the routine. Third, if you feel that your teen is not keeping to the agreement that was made (unless it is a matter of them not knowing how), then look for a logical consequence that has or will naturally occur to reflect on, such as a sibling’s hurt feelings over unkind words. Then, as you reflect, you might ask, *“How can you heal your sister’s hurt feelings?”* Your teen can think through what they might do or say to repair harm. Or you might apply a logical consequence as a teachable moment. One example of a logical consequence during a morning routine that’s gone awry might be to encourage your teen to apologize to their teacher for being late for school and make a plan to begin your morning routine earlier the next day.
- 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 Efforts

- No matter how old your teen is, your positive reinforcement and encouragement have a significant impact.
- There are many ways you can reinforce your teen's efforts. It is essential to distinguish between three types of reinforcement – recognition, rewards, and bribes. These three distinct parenting behaviors have different impacts on your teen's behavior.
 - **Recognize** even small successes to promote positive behaviors and expand confidence: *"You completed your project before practice and got to bed at a decent time- I love seeing that!"* Recognition can include nonverbal acknowledgment such as a smile, high five, or hug.
 - **Rewards** can be helpful in certain situations by providing a concrete, timely, and positive incentive for doing a good job. A reward is determined so the teen knows what to expect, like *"If you complete your homework routine before dinner, you can spend time gaming with your friends"* (if you XX, then I'll XX). The goal should be to help your teen progress to a time when the reward will no longer be needed. If used too often, rewards can decrease a teen's intrinsic motivation.
 - Unlike a reward, **bribes** aren't planned ahead of time and generally happen when a parent is in the middle of a crisis (like a teen arguing and refusing to leave a social gathering. To avoid disaster, a parent offers to stop for a snack on the way home if the teen will stop arguing and leave the event). While bribes can be helpful in the short term to manage stressful situations, they will not grow lasting motivation or behavior change and should be avoided.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, snuggle together after a smooth bedtime routine and listen to relaxing music. Or, in the morning, once ready for school, leave a special note of gratitude in their lunchbox.

[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](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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