

## **Routines and Incentives**

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, every family needs routines. They help to organize life and keep it from becoming too chaotic. Children do best when routines are regular, predictable, and consistent. One of a family's greatest challenges is to establish comfortable, effective routines, which should achieve a happy compromise between the disorder and confusion that can occur without them and the rigidity and boredom that can come with too much structure and regimentation, where children are given no choice and little flexibility

### **Here are a few suggestions when establishing a new routine.**

Here are some practical questions to think through as you plan your routine:

**What time of day are your children most focused and ready to learn?**

**What time do you have the least amount of distractions?**

**What commitments do you have outside the home each day?**

**What setting do your children learn best in? Reading on the couch? Sitting at a desk?**

**How much time do you want to devote to schooling each day?**

#### **1. Create a routine, not a schedule**

Very few of us are going to practically be able to follow a schedule. For most, time slots on a chart are only going to frustrate us as life happens and we are constantly thrown off that schedule. Shoot for beginning your first work block sometime between 8 and and then have one thing follow another until you are done. A checklist is a great way to start.

#### **2. Work in chunks**

It is easier to schedule in the blocks of our day instead of individual subjects. While you may complete the blocks in the same order every day, the work you do in each block may be different. For example, Reading block may be completing a chapter book and taking an AR test on Monday. On Tuesday, Reading block may be Lexia or comprehension passages.

#### **3. Leave margin**

You are never going to squeeze five hours of schoolwork into a five hour block. Something is going to happen — the washing machine will flood, the dog will escape over the fence, someone will decide this is a great day to have a stage-four math meltdown. You will most likely not get it done, and you will end up frustrated.

#### **4. Don't try to do every subject every day**

Feel free to alternate days or choose an alternative scheduling method like blocks or looping to fit in all of your subjects. Everything needs to be done regularly — not daily.

#### **5. Follow your natural inclinations**

If your family does not jump out of bed running in the morning, then resist scheduling an early start to your day. Enjoy the flexibility of home and work at your times of peak productivity. This also means taking into consideration your children's natural schedule and the fact that they have variations (which may not match yours!) as well. Got one early riser? Schedule his or her independent work first. Let the others get up right before group time and then do their independent work after.

#### **6. Draft a plan**

Block	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

**Here is a list of incentives your student may like:**

#### **Timers and Timed Goals**

Sometimes simply showing children there is an end point is enough to motivate them. Some children work best with a timer so they can see the minutes counting down and look forward to being done.

#### **Extra Recess**

An easy reward that doesn't cost anything is simply the promise of more free time—extra recess, extra screen time, or any similar reward that you know will appeal to your child.

#### **Reward Tracking Systems**

Reward charts are highly versatile and easy to use. You can use a sticker chart, a daily checklist, or any other type of record keeping you desire. Use the chart to

track completion of homeschool tasks your child dawdles over. Then depending on how well your child can delay gratification, offer daily or weekly rewards based on the charts.

### **The Sticker Chart**

A sticker chart typically uses one sticker for each completed task.

### **The M&M or LEGO Method**

When you need to reward individual problems for a serious dawdler, the M&M or LEGO method works well. The premise is simple. Lay one M&M, or one LEGO beside each math problem. As soon as the child completes the problem correctly, they get the candy or LEGO award. If their answer is incorrect, either mom gets the reward, or they can try again to earn their prize.

### **The Marble (or Bean) Jar**

Set up for this incentive is simple. You need a large jar and enough small pieces to fill it. I like marbles or colored rocks for aquariums, but you can use anything similar in size. Each time your child does a good job, they get to put a marble in the jar. When the jar is full, they have earned a reward.

### **Mommy Money/Daddy Dollars**

In this incentive, you create your own ticket system or family currency which kids earn in exchange for homeschool work, chores, or even positive behaviors. You hand out money as you feel fit for different tasks your child has done

- getting all their spelling words correct
- being kind to a sibling
- finishing a Science Activity Sheet
  - doing their chores without complaining

After they have a bit saved enough tickets or currency, they can exchange them for rewards. Here are some examples:

30 Daddy Dollars may equal an afternoon walk

100 Daddy Dollars earns extra screen game time

20 pieces of Mommy Money may equal one US dollar

**Sources:**

Caring for Your School-Age Child: Ages 5 to 12 (Copyright © 2004 American Academy of Pediatrics)

<https://blog.sonlight.com/incentives-dawdler.html>

<https://pambarnhill.com/best-tips-creating-homeschool-daily-schedule/>