

The Daily Schedule: A Typical Day in Preschool

Your preschooler probably does best when he or she knows what to expect each day. When your child's normal schedule is disrupted, establishing a predictable daily schedule at home can help your child feel secure and understand when things will happen.

You can create predictable routines and experiences at home that mimic what your child has come to expect in our program. Below are some ideas that will help you offer the similar kinds of experiences your child engages with in our program.

Every family is juggling a different set of responsibilities and circumstances. It is absolutely okay if you're unable to re-create all of these times of day. If needed, start small and look to add in additional experiences over time as you and your children adjust to a routine that makes sense for your family.

Early morning

Maintain as much consistency as possible in your morning routine. Start each morning as if you were preparing your family to leave your home for school and work.

Morning meeting

After your typical morning routines, try to gather as a family to start the day. This is an opportunity to share what each of you would like to accomplish, delegate responsibilities (e.g., feeding pets, sweeping the kitchen, joining a conference call for work, planning a menu), engage in a fun song or dance, and review your schedule for the day.

Choice time

In our program, your child has an opportunity choose where to play (e.g., in the Block area, the Discovery area, the Library area, or the Art area), and with whom they would like to play. While this time in our classroom is supervised by an adult, the children's play is not directed by an adult. The children make the choices! Below are some ideas to help you recreate "choice time" play at home. Don't feel that you need to offer all of these choices each day, but do consider providing a variety of experiences. Doing so will help sustain your child's interest.

- **Blocks:** Provide building blocks, a variety of boxes/containers, baskets, plastic cups, paper tubes, tape, doll house, and toy animals.
- **Dramatic play:** Provide costumes, dress-up clothes, household props, family members' clothes, scarves, kitchen utensils, and pillows, etc. Consider how you might repurpose household items to create a new imaginative space. For example, could you create a pretend grocery store? A doctor's office? A pet supply store? An office? A yoga studio? A post office?
- **Toys and games:** Provide toys and games that you have in your home or can borrow, such as age-appropriate puzzles, card games, and board games.
- **Art:** Provide paper, crayons, markers, clay or molding dough, chalk, paint, scissors, old magazines, glue, and scrap materials (e.g., buttons, fabric, recycled caps, etc.). Consider setting aside a place for "works in progress" that your child can revisit.
- **Library:** Provide books, magazines, and props for story retelling. Have pencils, paper, and crayons handy to encourage children to either reflect on the story or make their own.
- **Discovery:** Provide household and other readily available materials that your child can investigate, such as magnets, plants, mirrors, flashlights, soil, and rocks.
- **Sand and water:** Fill a small container with water or sand. Add objects that your child can fill with the water or sand and then dump. You can also engage your child in this activity during bath time or while washing dishes after a meal.
- **Music and movement:** Play your favorite age-appropriate playlist and invite your child to join you in a family dance. Consider repurposing your recyclables as instruments that your child can use to play along to the beat.

Guided learning

This is an opportunity for more focused learning. Rest assured that if your child is playing (either independently or with others) and interacting with you throughout the day, learning is taking place! If your schedule allows, you can extend your child's play by introducing opportunities to practice skills in literacy or math. For example, you can invite your child to retell the events of a favorite story or to line up all the shoes in the house from biggest to smallest. Here are some additional activities that can support this time of day.

Read-aloud

Sharing a book together presents a wonderful opportunity to snuggle up with your child and promote literacy learning in the comfort of your own home! Simply select a favorite book and read it together. Check out this YouTube page to see how you can make this experience more interactive and meaningful. If you have older children, you can invite them to read to their younger siblings. There's no such thing as too many interactive read-alouds in a day!

Outdoor play

If your circumstances allow it, try to accompany your child outdoors for 60 minutes of outdoor play a day. If you are unable to do so, consider creating experiences indoors that encourage your child to use skills such as moving from place to place or balancing. For example, you can place masking tape on the floor to create a "balance beam" or use your furniture to create an obstacle course that enables your child to practice going up, over, and under obstacles.

Handwashing and Meal Preparation

Encourage your child to help you prepare snacks and meals. As you prepare food together, talk through the steps with your child. Introduce new vocabulary and invite your child to count napkins, set the table, and measure ingredients. Consider creating a recipe card that your child can follow to create a snack independently. For example, if you are offering apple slices and cheese as a snack, you can write down a "recipe" of 4 apple slices and 4 pieces of cheese and encourage your child to create the snack.

Rest time

While the concept of "rest time" may look different for every child, it is important to set aside some quiet time each day to balance out more high-energy play. If your child is not prepared to sleep at this point, he or she can engage in a quiet activity such as reading, drawing, or doing a puzzle.

End of Day Group meeting

Try to use this time to reflect on the day and set expectations for the next day. Consider ending your day with a family group meeting. This is an opportunity for everyone to share something they enjoyed doing, something they learned, and something they would like to try tomorrow.

Evening

Maintain as much consistency as possible for your evening routine. End each day with a routine that closely mirrors a typical day, e.g., an evening meal, a warm bath, a story, and a kiss goodnight.

Here is a sample schedule that shows the routines and experiences that we typically enjoy in our program each day. That said, every family is different, so feel free to adjust this schedule to meet the reality of your family's situation.

Morning meeting

10–20 minutes (9:00–9:20)

Rest time

60 minutes (12:50–1:50)

Choice time

60 minutes (9:20–10:20)

Hand-washing and Snack Time

20 minutes (1:50–2:10)

Guided learning

20 minutes (10:20–10:40)

Guided Learning

20 minutes (2:10–2:30)

Read-aloud

15 minutes (10:40–10:55)

Additional choice time

60 minutes (2:30–3:30)

Outdoor play

60 minutes (10:55–11:55)

Outdoor play

45 minutes (3:30–4:15)

Handwashing, meal prep and lunch

35 minutes (11:55–12:30)

Group meeting

15 minutes (4:15–4:30)

Read-aloud

20 minutes (12:30–12:50)

*Consider creating a pictorial daily schedule (i.e., a schedule with words and pictures) that you can post in your home. Doing so allows children to see what you have planned for the day and the sequence of events.