

School mornings

How to get kids ready for school without a fight

By Raising Children Network http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/school_morning_routines.html

How things go at home in the morning can set the tone for the day ahead. Children who arrive at school feeling calm, relaxed, fed and ready can make the most of the first few hours of the day.

Children don't understand time in the same way as grown-ups. This can make school mornings a stressful time of day for families. Time pressures and competing demands can turn mornings into a combat zone.

Getting along in the morning at home will also help you. Research shows that fighting with children in the morning makes it harder for you to work well. It even increases the risk of you having an accident at work.

Here are some ideas to take some of the pressure out of school mornings – even if things don't always go smoothly!

The night before

- Try to find out the night before (or even earlier) if there is something special going on at school.
- Prepare lunches and set the breakfast table ready for the morning rush.
- Get your child to have a bath the night before. This means you won't have to worry about this in the morning.
- You might know something is going to come up that could cause conflict (such as buying lunch or choosing which clothes to wear). Talk about it the night before when everybody has time and is less likely to be stressed.

Try to read school newsletters and check bags for notes the night before. You could also try to prepare clothes, sign school notes, and get schoolbags ready the night before.

In the morning

- **Getting up an extra 15-30 minutes earlier might help things run more smoothly.** Also try to allow plenty of time to get from home to school. Rushing can really increase stress levels.
- **Good moods can be infectious.** Tackle the morning as positively and as optimistically as you can.
- **Mornings are easier if your children can do things for themselves.** Once your children are old enough, getting dressed on their own, making their own breakfast, and tidying up after themselves can all make things easier.
- If your children are young, **remind them what they are meant to be doing** and when. Simple 'to do' checklists, even with pictures, can help as a reminder.
- Some children get up more easily if they have an **alarm clock**.
- Try to **cut down on distractions**. Television is one of the culprits that can distract children from getting ready. Consider leaving it off, unless it's a special treat for being ready on time.
- **Focus on the positives.** A rule of thumb here is six positives for every negative. Look for good behaviour and try to ensure that positive comments – [praise and encouragement](#) – outweigh instructions and reprimands.
- **Use surprises to celebrate cooperation** and being ready on time. A treat in the lunch box, or an extra story at bedtime might be all it takes.
- **Try not to give your children extra attention for arguing, whining or stalling.** Even negative attention is an incentive for them to keep arguing, whining and stalling.