

Childcare Connections

Daily Schedule & Routines

Maintaining regularity in daily routines, while allowing flexibility to meet individual children's needs, is essential for high-quality early childhood programs. A consistent schedule provides predictability and structure, helping children feel secure. Your schedule should be age-appropriate and include varied instructional approaches with a balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. It should also offer opportunities for learning centers, small groupwork, and whole group experiences.

Day Care Centre Regulations 1999, Regulation 6(2); Child Care Standards 2018, Standard 3

Elements of a schedule

<https://www.virtuallabschool.org/preschool/learning-environments/lesson-5>

Free Choice Time: All children need at least two 20-minute periods of free choice each day [Day Care Centre Regulations 1999, Regulation 6,2(b)]. This time allows them to choose activities that align with their interests and promote autonomy in learning. Teachers can organize the classroom into a variety of learning centers, which can be used during free choice or small group periods.

Small-Group Activities: Small-group activities provide children with opportunities to interact with peers and teachers in a more personalized setting. These activities tend to focus on targeted learning goals and allow for individualized support. Small-group sessions can be conducted at the same time as learning center activities.

Outdoor Time: Children must have daily opportunities for outdoor play, where they can engage in intellectual, social, and motor activities while interacting with the natural environment.

[Day Care Centre Regulations 1999, Regulation 6,2(b, j)]

Large-Group Activities: Group times, such as morning circle, can help children develop a sense of belonging and build community. These periods are often teacher-directed and provide opportunities for direct instruction. The length of large-group times should be developmentally appropriate for the age of children involved.

Transitions: Well-managed, organized transitions help maximize learning time and reduce challenging behaviors. Schedules should be flexible to allow children to move out of activities once they are ready. Transitions are most effective when teachers provide advance warnings, maintain consistency, and are prepared for what happens next.

Routines: Arrival, departure, bathroom breaks, naps, and meals are all part of routines that should be included in your daily schedule. While they should be responsive to the needs of the children, they should also make sense in the timing and flow of your day.

Benefits of Effective Routines

Sense of security and comfort: Children rely on predictable routines to feel safe and secure. Consistent schedules help children understand what comes next, reducing anxiety and giving them a sense of control of their environment.

Self-regulation & Independence: Consistent and structured schedules help children develop independence as they learn to complete tasks on their own as they move throughout their day. Using child-friendly visual schedules allows children to follow along and anticipate what comes next, supporting both self-regulation and confidence.

Positive Behavior: Consistent routines help reduce power struggles by setting clear expectations that children can anticipate.

Promotes Learning and Development: Predictable schedules ensure children consistently experience opportunities that support cognitive, social, and physical growth.



Information sourced from: <https://headstart.gov/about-us/article/importance-schedules-routines>; <https://www.cceionline.com/the-benefits-of-routines-in-early-childhood-education/>; <https://imaginationcrossing.com/the-importance-of-routine-in-a-daycare-environment-how-structure-helps-children-thrive/>