



## Ways to Save Time at Home and in the Classroom

A good deal of time can be lost when children lose items, run late, or transition slowly from one activity to the next. These occurrences not only affect the child, but other people around them. This article includes strategies for saving time, being more efficient, and making transitions easier.

- 1. Stick to a Routine** – Consistency in routines and schedules helps children understand where they should be and what they should be doing. Routines avoid conflicts and help children prepare for activities. For example, if children know the family goes grocery shopping every Saturday morning at 10 a.m., they expect and plan for this activity. Classroom schedules often provide structure, but when children return home they sometimes have more flexible routines. Visual schedules at school and home often help children. Use pictures, drawings, or words to let children know what comes next. Even a simple chalk board or dry erase board can be used at home to let children know their schedule.
- 2. Plan Ahead** – Certain times of the day can be hectic such as getting ready for school or leaving school. Have children get things ready in advance. Set clothes out the night before, get school bags ready, and put homework in backpacks well before children need to line up for the bus. These strategies avoid last minute confusion which can take extra time.
- 3. Stay Organized** – Children frequently spend time looking for lost items. Help them organize their space and make a point of keeping areas organized. Use labels to let children know where their toys, clothes, or desk items belong. Pictures from magazines, drawings, photographs, or words can be attached to bookshelves, placed in drawers, or taped on containers as visual reminders. Define locations with jigs (cut outs indicating the shape of the items), containers, or designated shelf space. Make sure children consistently return items to the correct location so they are able to quickly and easily locate them.
- 4. Prepare Children in Advance** – When children are given specific times or cues to transition, they are less likely to protest or to stall. Natural cues such as when a show ends or created cues like when the timer goes off, let children know it is time to transition. Some children benefit from a timer or clock so they can see the deadline approaching. Consistently enforcing these transitions is essential for teaching children to follow them. Allowing a child to watch an extra five minutes of the next show or telling them you will re-set a clock sends the message that schedules can be negotiated and often wastes time.
- 5. Work as a Team** – Whether setting the table, walking the dog, or cleaning up after recess, working with others is more fun and more productive than working alone. Give children tasks that are part of a group effort such as pouring the drinks, getting Spot's leash, or collecting the balls. Working as a team saves time, teaches responsibility, and helps children learn the importance of working together.
- 6. Remember to Reinforce** – When children are ready on time, have their space organized, follow transition cues, and work with others to accomplish a goal, be sure to recognize their efforts. A simple thank you, pat on the back, or extra story at bedtime can mean a lot to a child. Mention exactly what they did correctly and reinforce them immediately after they completed the task. For example, "Ally, you did a great job helping Todd set the table. Thank you for putting the plates and cups in the right place."

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