

Children are spontaneous but, like most of us, they need to have a general idea of what to expect from moment to moment. They like to know they can depend on certain daily routines. A daily schedule helps children feel secure in their environment. When you say things like, “After nap, we will go outside” children learn what to expect and come to know that they can count on you.

A daily schedule helps you organize your day. It allows you to plan a variety of developmental activities and experiences for children. A good daily schedule for children offers a balance of activities.

A Good Schedule:

1. Provides a balance between these kinds of activities.
 - indoor and outdoor play
 - quiet and active times
 - time to play alone and time to play with others
 - time for free play and time to join an activity you have planned
2. Pays particular attention to transition times during the day
 - greeting children when they arrive and are separating from their parents
 - cleaning up after meals and snacks
 - getting ready to go outside
 - cleaning up one activity so that another can be started
 - getting ready for nap
 - arrival and departure of school-age children or part-time children
 - preparing to go home
3. Reflects your unique situation.
 - when your child care children arrive and depart
 - when babies need to eat and nap
 - when children need to have meals and snacks
 - the ages and stages of the children in your care

A written schedule gives you a blueprint for the day. You can then fit activities into your schedule to make your day constructive and responsive to the children. Post your schedule so parents can see what a typical day at your child care home is like for their child.

Yet, within the schedule, the flexible provider gives the children unspoken permission to learn in their own way and encourages exploration and discovery. A variety of open-ended materials—or materials that can be used in many different ways—are made available to children. Children are able to select the materials they wish to use, and are

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encouraged to use their imaginations with the materials. The flexible provider extends the children's play by adding new props or materials, rotating toys from week to week, and suggesting new ways to use materials. For example, you might suggest that the children change their outdoor water play activity from "painting the fence" to a "bike and trike wash."

Flexibility lets you capture the moment. If the children are totally engrossed in their play, delay, lunch for half an hour. If everyone is starving at 2:00pm, serve snacks a little early. If someone loses a tooth, take time to talk about it and, if the children are very interested, change your dramatic play area to include materials for a dentist office. If the day you planned a picnic turns out to be rainy, set up an indoor picnic on an old blanket on the floor.

Children are spontaneous and a flexible attitude on your part fosters a fun, relaxed and responsive learning environment for children.

Daily Schedule (Sample)

Welcome to our family child care home! Listed below is what your child will experience during a typical day. My philosophy is to provide a structured setting for children, so they know what to expect and feel secure. Within this structure, I allow for flexibility so that I can better meet the needs and interests of all the children.

MORNING ACTIVITIES

- 7:15 – 8:00** As children arrive, a variety of activities are available for them to do, such as table toys, blocks, books and story tapes. I rotate the toys every week for interest.
- 8:00 – 8:30** Clean up, prepare and eat breakfast, and clean up again! Each child has an opportunity to help with meal chores such as setting the table or mixing the juice.
- 8:30 – 9:45** Children have a choice of selecting an activity of their choice or joining in a group activity such as painting, water play or cooking.
- 9:45 – 10:00** Get ready to go outside: bathroom time, changing diapers, wash hands, etc.
- 10:00 – 11:00** Outdoor play that is a combination of free play on the swing set or sand box, and group activities such as walks in the neighborhood, a science project such as gardening or an outdoor art project.
- 11:00 – 11:30** Individual choice – dramatic play, blocks, board games.

LUNCH AND REST

- 11:30 – 11:40** Clean up for lunch. Wash hands.

- 11:40 – 12:30** Family style lunch and conversation. Again, each child has an opportunity to help with chores. After lunch, everyone brushes teeth, uses the bathroom or diaper change, washes hands.
- 12:30 – 12:45** Story time. This is a time to slow down before rest time and enjoy a good book.
- 12:45 – 2:45** Every one has a rest time. Preschool children who can't sleep rest quietly on their cots, looking at books for 30-40 minutes before they are allowed to get up and start a quiet activity.
- 2:45 – 3:00** Children wake up, put away cots, use the bathroom and wash hands.

AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES

- 3:00 – 3:20** Snack time.
- 3:20 – 4:30** Active outdoor play.
- 4:30 – 5:30** Departure time. Children choose activities such as coloring, reading, table toys, etc., until their parents arrive. Events of the day and plans for the next day are discussed with children and parents as they leave.