

The Importance of Daily Schedules

Consistent classroom schedules help create an environment where children are more likely to be engaged, attentive, and receptive to learning. When children are able to predict what will happen next, they feel secure and prepared.

Building relationships and trust can take place in a predictable classroom. Teachers are able to create intentional learning opportunities when there is a predictable sequence of events each day. Teachers also have the opportunity to focus more on meaningful interactions and less on managing behaviors when activities and transitions are planned.

Planning Your Classroom Schedule

Elements to Include	Important Factors to Consider
Meals/ Snacks	Children should be offered food at least every 3 hours; however, food should be provided based on individual needs. Consider the ages and eating habits of the children in your group.
Toileting/ Diapering	An individualized approach is the best way to meet the needs of the children. Consider staffing needs and plan for ways to avoid having children wait. Toileting and diapering should occur at least once every 2 hours and as needed.
Nap/ Rest	When determining the scheduled time, consider the ages and needs of the children in the group. Infants will need an individualized approach, but older children will also require flexibility.
Indoor Free Play	A schedule with maximum opportunities for free play is the best practice for every age group. Allow children as many choices as possible and use free play as an opportunity to join children and add learning experiences. Tip: Add a 5-10 minute "cushion" to your scheduled free play periods to help ensure children experience the full amount of time you have planned.
Outdoor Free Play	Plan for outdoor free play daily, weather permitting. Become familiar with the recommendations for your age group concerning weather permitting conditions. Ideally, outdoor play occurs for 1 hour per day, with some time in both the morning and afternoon.
Group Times	Consider the ages, abilities and interests of the children in your group. For younger children, group time may only be realistic for a few minutes, or not at all. Group times are most effective when they are optional, flexible, and based on the children's interests. In general, group times are best limited to 20 minutes maximum.
Transitions	Including transitions in the daily schedule is the most effective way to ensure they run smoothly. Plan ahead for staffing roles during transitions, have transition activities prepared when needed, and periodically review your transitions to make adjustments. The goal is to minimize wait times and avoid unnecessary transitions.

Reflective questions to determine if the schedule is effective:

