

Starting Each Day: Tips to Get out the Door On Time

By Anne Prowant

Mornings can be tough. Everyone needs to get up, get dressed, have breakfast, and be ready to go, often in a short amount of time. We parents can end up rushed, frazzled, and short on patience. No one wants to begin the day that way! Here are a few simple, sanity-saving tips to help mornings with young children feel more manageable.

1. *Establish a nighttime routine.*

A good morning starts the night before. Children thrive on consistency, so implement a predictable bedtime routine at the same time every night.

Maria Montessori observed that children find security in a predictable schedule. Sticking to the same ritual (perhaps a bath, then story, then song, then lights out) each evening will comfort your child and make it easier to start winding down. Turn off any screens 60 minutes before bed, as these can interfere with restful sleep.

2. *Prepare the night before.*

Minimizing the number of things you have to do in the morning is a simple way to streamline your routine. Encourage your children to select and lay out appropriate clothing for the next day, engage them in preparing lunches and/or starting the next day's breakfast, and remind them to place items that need to go to school by the front door. Children as young as 1 can begin to be independent in dressing themselves, and older children can pack their own lunches. Resist the urge to step in—allow children to struggle a little, helping only when you see they may be becoming frustrated. Affording responsibilities like these offers children opportunities for input and thus a sense of ownership.

3. *Stay organized.*

One way to avoid a frantic last-minute search for backpacks and shoes is to keep all of these items in the same place. Establish a cubby area near the doorway that has a place for shoes, backpacks, coats, and mittens. Make sure it is attractive and child-size to promote independence and a desire to keep it organized. (Montessori was the first educator to stress the importance of child-size furniture in the classroom.) Set and uphold the expectation that this is where your children should neatly store their things, and take time with your children to restore order if the cubbies get a little messy during the week.

4. *Use the clock.*

In this busy world, children can feel rushed around without any understanding of why, and this can lead to tantrums and power struggles. Explain to your child that everyone needs to be out of the house at a certain time. Show them that time on the clock (or use a sand timer for



younger children). In the morning, point to the clock and say, “Oh, look! We need to leave in 10 minutes. What should we be doing now?” Wait for an answer, but if the child cannot give one, be direct: “Now is the time to put on our coats and shoes.”

It's possible to make the morning routine a team effort, rather than a competition with parents doing all the heavy lifting. The keys are to be prepared, give yourself plenty of time, and allow your children to be independent. Yes, it may be faster in the moment to dress them yourself and rush them out the door. But in the long run, offering your children some ownership over their morning will enable a more peaceful routine for everyone.

Listen to your children's input and involve them in the process—by doing so, you show respect and positively impact self-esteem. As Montessori (2014) asserted, “Children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by reason of their innocence and of the greater possibilities of their future.”

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Reference

Montessori, M. (2014.) *Dr. Montessori's own handbook*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.