

## How to Be Successful with a New Routine

by Sarah Kakkuri (CCC Teacher)

As a parent, a person with a child development background, and experience working with young children I understand the importance of routines. But after a long day at work, the only thing I want to do is vegetate on the couch while snuggling with my son and watch a few mindless cartoons until we both fall asleep. This is a routine that we slipped into when he was about two-years-old. I thought, “Oh, one night won’t hurt if we fall asleep on the couch”, instead of our set bedtime routine that we had in place of brushing teeth, reading books and going to sleep in his bed. Was I wrong!! After the one night on the couch, he wanted to do this every night. And my thought was, “Hey, this is way easier than a set bedtime routine.” Plus I loved the “snuggle time.” Here we are today, almost four years later.... Jakob will be six in April and we are just now getting back into our set bedtime routine of brushing teeth, reading books and sleeping in his own bed. Now that Jakob is getting older, I felt it was time for a new routine and for him to start sleeping in his own bed. The question for me was, “How do I start this new routine?” First of all, when I decided it was time for the new routine, my husband & I discussed this with Jakob during dinner – what was going to happen that evening. We were going to brush teeth, read books in his room, and he was going to fall asleep in his bed. (Of course, being the negotiator that he is, he tried to get me to forego the new routine until the next night.) But, I stood my ground; and that evening we began the new routine. As I write this, we are a few weeks into our new routine and I must say it’s going pretty well. On the weekends we do sway from the set routine and have a “movie night” in our bed, but the understanding is that it’s just on the weekends.

When I speak of routines, it doesn’t have to be just bedtime routines, it can be any routine that a parent thinks of or wants to change at home (getting ready in the morning or an entire evening routine). Here are some tips to help get you started with a new routine and to make it go more smoothly:

- **Ease into the new routine** – talk about how you are going to implement the new routine with your child before it actually takes place.
- **Be consistent** – children thrive on order and predictable routines to feel safe and secure.
- **Give your child a choice (when possible)** – this will give your child some control over the situation at hand. “Do you want to brush teeth first, or read books?”
- **Offer advance notice before transitioning into the routine** – “In 5 minutes it’s time to put your toys away and come to the table for dinner.”

- **Notice and comment when your child has followed the routine without trouble**
  - “I love how you got your P.J.’s on when I asked the first time!”

These are just a few examples I found in an article titled “Temperament Characteristics: Reactions to Change” from the website: [zerotothree.org](http://zerotothree.org)

The transition into the new routine may not go smoothly at first, but keep at it. I promise as long as there is consistency and your child knows what to expect next, in no time you will have a successful routine in place.