

Though your morning may seem hectic and disorganized, there is actually a pattern to what you do. Getting up, getting dressed, and having breakfast are all examples of “daily routines”: things that you and your child do in the exact same way every day. Daily routines can help your child make sense of his world because they are **repetitive** and **predictable**. The more times your child does something the same way, the clearer the meaning of what is happening becomes.

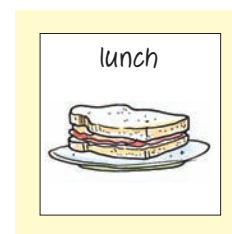
In this chapter, we will look at the ways in which the activities you do every day with your child – your daily routines – can increase his understanding of what you do and say, and how Visual Helpers can contribute to this understanding. We will also see that when you use R.O.C.K., daily routines become much like People Games: structured activities in which both you and your child have opportunities to take turns and interact.

## R.O.C.K. in Your Daily Routines

### **R.** Repeat What You Say and Do

#### **Repeat what you say and do when you start the routine**

The first step of any routine is to announce it by saying its name and doing something specific associated with it, like showing your child his pajamas before bedtime. If you begin routines with specific names or labels, your child will associate those words with the routine: “Bathtime” for having a bath or “Brush teeth” for brushing his teeth. It is important to be consistent in what you say and do. For example, if you say “Let’s have lunch” one day and “Time to eat” another, your child won’t learn to associate specific words with lunchtime. So, decide what labels you’re going to attach to your routines and stick to those names. Printing the name of the routine on the top of a Picture Schedule may remind you to be consistent. As well, start your routines with the same action every time. For example, if you’re telling your child it’s lunchtime, you can either bring your hand to your mouth as if you were eating or hold up your child’s plate. You may want to sing a special song at the beginning of a routine to help your child understand what is about to happen. There isn’t one right way to start the routine, but once you decide what you’re going to do, don’t change it until your child is ready to learn something new.



*If you print the name of the routine next to a picture, you’ll be more likely to use the same words every day.*

The second step of many routines is for your child to come to you so that you can do the routine together. Some children will come all on their own, while others may not come even after you call, “Come here.” To get your child to respond to “Come here,” use the Helper’s Rule, described in Chapter 1. Call your child’s name and say “Come here” once. Then wait. If he doesn’t respond, call him again, physically guiding him over to the site of the routine.

In addition to “Come here,” daily routines provide ideal opportunities for your child to learn to follow other simple directions in a natural, meaningful way. For example, some routines, like meal-times, begin when your child sits down at the table, so in these routines your child can get a lot of practice responding to the direction “Sit down.”

### **Repeat what you say and do during the routine**

As with People Games, do the actions of the routine in the same way and order each time you do them until your child is very familiar with them. Keep what you say simple and consistent. Remember to “say less and stress, go slow and show.” With practice, your child will start to understand how the routine works and will participate in it at his level of ability. Once your child can follow the routine without your help, you can vary it by introducing something new. For example, you can offer your child a choice or do something unexpected.

### **Repeat what you say and do when you end the routine**

Just as your routines need beginnings, they also need clear endings. Always make the “finished” sign, saying “all done” or “finished,” and then put the picture of whatever routine or part of the routine you’ve completed into the “finished” container. You may want to add, “Give me a hug,” “Give me a kiss” or “Give me five” (done by slapping your open palm against your child’s open palm) as a final step in your routine. In addition, you can develop other rituals to help your child understand that a routine is over. For example, to let your child know that he has heard the last story before bedtime, say, “The End. And now bed.” You can sing a specific song or turn out the lights in the hallway before turning out his lights. No matter what you do, make sure you do it the same way each time.



*If you end your routines by making the “finished” sign, your child will see that the activity is over.*