

DAILY SCHEDULE FOR CHILDREN 2–4 YEARS OF AGE*

7–7:30 A.M. WAKE UP ROUTINE, INCLUDING TOILETING, AND BREAKFAST

- Good morning, families! Think about all of the important things you do every day for your family. You are exactly the parent your children need you to be right now.
- Most children show interest in using the potty between 18 months and 2 years of age. When you see these signs (dry diapers, your child noticing when their diaper is full and expressing their discomfort, an interest in sitting on the potty), it is time to start practicing toileting.
- Provide your child with a daily visual schedule and teach them how to use a timer to promote independence. All children, including children with disabilities, benefit from predictable routines.
- Keep in mind that children learn throughout the day during typical daily routines. So even though you might set aside specific time to work on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or other specific learning goals with a teacher or special educator, your child is learning throughout the day with endless opportunities to practice new skills!

7:30–8 A.M. INDEPENDENT PLAY AND/OR TV OR OTHER SCREEN TIME

8–8:15 A.M. CHOOSE MY CLOTHES AND GET DRESSED

- Provide a few clothing items and allow your child to choose what to wear for the day.
- Use words and encourage conversations during self-care routines. For example, “Do you want your blue shirt or a green shirt?” or “I have two socks, what about you?”
- Social stories can be helpful when teaching your child self-care skills. You can find social stories online (<https://headstartinclusion.org>) with images to download and make your own book, or you can create your own social story by using photos of your child going through the routine (i.e., photos of your child getting out of bed, brushing her teeth, combing his hair, etc.).

8:15–9 A.M. PLANNED LEARNING EXPERIENCE OR ACTIVITY

- Join an online activity with your child’s teacher or home visitor, or select a planned learning activity suggested by your child’s teacher or home visitor related to your child’s learning goals.
- For children with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP), use technology to work on IEP goals with your child’s teacher. IFSP or IEP goals and objectives may not be your child’s preferred virtual learning activity, so it’s important to mix preferred and nonpreferred activities to increase engagement.
 - For example, write the name of each activity on a Popsicle stick. Each Popsicle stick would have either an activity to address an IEP objective or a preferred activity such as “Imitate your favorite animal” or “Show your teacher something from home.” During each virtual meeting, your child can choose a Popsicle stick until all of the activities are done. When you add some fun, children are more willing to engage with the nonpreferred activities.
- See this resource for guidance about virtual IEP meetings and home visits: https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/disaster/Planning_for_the_Use_of_Video_Conferencing_in_EI_during_COVID-19_Pandemic.pdf
- You can also try using a “first-then” schedule:
 - “First we’ll read a book, then you can play on the tablet.”
 - “First get dressed, then we can watch a show together.”
 - “First I need a break, then I can help you.”
- Recorded videos can also help reinforce IFSP or IEP goals. For example, a child may be more interested in trying out adaptive equipment after seeing a peer using the equipment. This [video](#) illustrates how video peer modeling was used to support 2-year-old Nelcy to start using a walker and ultimately walk without it.

 9–10 A.M. INTEREST-BASED PLAY AND EXPLORATION

- Choose an activity from materials and resources sent to your home by your child’s teacher or home visitor. This will extend learning for your child based upon his or her interests.
- Make sure to include movement breaks throughout the day.

 10–10:45 A.M. OUTDOOR TIME OR ACTIVE PLAY

- Go to the playground or backyard or take a walk around the neighborhood.
- Dance to music, practice yoga, or try other movement favorites.

 10:45–11 A.M. TOILETING OR DIAPERING TIME

 11–11:45 A.M. LUNCH

- Add conversations to lunch and other mealtimes. Use pictures or photos to start the conversation. Take turns and include other family members.

 NOON–12:30 P.M. STORY TIME AND BOOK READING

 12:30–2 P.M. REST, NAP, OR QUIET PLAY TIME

- Children 2–4 years of age need 11 to 13 hours of sleep each day, including naps.

 2–2:15 P.M. TOILETING OR DIAPERING TIME

 2:15–3 P.M. OUTDOOR TIME OR ACTIVE PLAY

- Go to the playground or backyard or take a walk around the neighborhood.
- Dance to music, practice yoga, or try other movement favorites.
- Reach out to trusted friends and family members via phone or online video calls to spend time with children as a special afternoon activity. For children with IEPs, this can include working on IEP goals that don’t require physical prompting.

 3–4:30 P.M. INDEPENDENT PLAY WITH YOUR CHILD’S FAVORITES

- Create an activity bin of things your child can do safely on their own. Have your child help you choose things to put in the bin.
- Your teacher, home visitor, early intervention provider, or special education teacher can give you ideas for activities to include that will also support your child’s specific learning goals (including IEP goals).
- Take advantage of outdoor time to work on learning goals, including those in IEPs for children with disabilities. For example, practice counting while jumping or hopping. Practice following directions by following active directions like “run to the tree, touch the ground, and hop to the swing set.”
- Make simple treasure hunts for the yard or house. Give child a visual list of toys or items to find.

 4:30–5 P.M. DINNER PREP AND HELP AND/OR TV OR OTHER SCREEN TIME

- Phew! That was a busy day of caring for your child. Remember to make time to take care of yourself each day, too! Exercise regularly, eat healthy balanced meals, and get plenty of sleep. Breathe deeply, stretch, or meditate.

*For children 18–24 months of age, this schedule or the schedule for 12–18 months may be useful, depending on your child’s readiness and development. Families can also choose elements of both to best meet their child’s needs.