



## Babies love routine. Do you have yours downpat?

The best advice you can get for managing a baby is to establish a routine. A newborn baby's routine should be very simple and look like this – feed + sleep. This needs to be repeated throughout the day for the first six weeks.

It surprises most parents that there's no play time needed in the first six weeks. But a newborn baby is meant to sleep between 18 and 20 hours a day. Unfortunately, it's during this crucial time that our family usually comes to stay and our babies have lots of visitors. Sometimes baby is kept up so visitors can have a cuddle and you may even hear 'Don't put them to bed, they're not tired!'. Then, when the crying starts, your visitors tactfully leave!

After six weeks, your routine should change to feed + play + sleep, with awake time being about 50-minute stretches. As your baby gets older, the amount of awake time should increase but only gradually. A six-month-old baby should be up for about an hour to an hour and a quarter. For one-year-olds, it should be two hours up and two hours sleep.

A routine is essential for your baby's sense of security and to ensure they get enough sleep. And for you? You'll feel in control and in a better position to make decisions about what your baby needs when they're crying. The predictability of a routine will give you more time to just enjoy being a parent, which is the most important part. To help you keep on track with the routine, write it on a whiteboard or large piece of paper and secure it somewhere obvious, like a corkboard in your kitchen or on your fridge.

So is there a routine on your fridge now? Great. The next question is, is it up-to-date? If you don't have your routine up yet, then sit down tonight, and I mean tonight not tomorrow or next week, and write one out. Even if your kids are older and at school, they still need a routine for their week including all their after-school activities and extra items needed for different days at school.

Where do you start? By including these markers...

**FOOD:** Write down all meal times including breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner.

**PLAY:** Mark in scheduled time for playing, both inside and out, on their own and with you.



**SLEEP:** Write down sleep and nap times or, if your child is older and not sleeping during the day any more, add in rest time. They still need time out in the morning and afternoon just to relax and quieten down.

**NECESSARIES:** Also add in bath time, story time and jobs around the house if your child is walking and able to help.

**About the author:** Psychologist and parent Nicole Pierotti is a baby sleep and parenting expert. To find out about her baby preparation workshops for expectant parents, call 4725 4699 or visit [www.babysmiles.com.au](http://www.babysmiles.com.au)