

Starting New Routines with Kids

Have a family meeting:

1. Admit we don't always get it right the first time and we can always improve. Show your vulnerability.
2. Explain that we want to make a change that will help everyone.
3. Point out what's in it for them—they will get more time with Mom and Dad, etc.
4. Show how this will provide more freedom and not be so busy and in the car all time.
5. Consider alternating which child gets to be involved in extracurricular activities each season.
6. Don't just eliminate. Replace! Emphasize the benefit of the new routine; e.g. Family Night takes the place of soccer games.

Other things to consider in the process:

1. Take a specific week to train or practice the new routines and responsibilities. This gives you a concentrated time to teach and follow up with new routine.
2. Use this time to reward them for cooperating and getting in the new flow of things. Be positive and recognize their desire to cooperate with the new plan or routine. Cheer them on.
3. Training is a process. Don't expect everything to go smoothly from the start. Inspect what you expect. Start out positively and verbally reinforce every approximation of the new task or routine.
4. Make it a game—even if they are learning something new or given a new responsibility. Set the timer: can we beat the clock? Who can be the first to go brush their teeth? Who can show me how to obey right away? Who wants to "fight for the bottom" and let their brother or sister go first?
5. Be consistent. Boundaries and routines give children security. If not consistent, your children will complain and argue about the new routine, and misbehavior will result.
6. Eventually, if they are not cooperating, you can give them a consequence.