

All About HighScope

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**Daily
Routine**

Practical summaries of HighScope's history, educational approach, and curriculum

Why is a daily routine important?

In a HighScope setting, we organize classroom and playground time into a daily routine, just as we organize classroom space into interest areas. The day's events determine how we'll use the classroom or playground space and what types of interactions children will experience. This predictable daily sequence of events, in which children can make plans and anticipate what will happen next, gives them a sense of control and a feeling of confidence. The daily routine also helps us organize time in ways that offer them interesting and challenging learning experiences.

What are the benefits of a predictable and consistent daily routine?

The daily routine supports children's choices, decisions, and plans — the basic framework for development. It provides a structure

within which children can decide what they want to do. We develop the routine with their needs and interests in mind and provide opportunities for them to express their goals, follow through with their plans, and solve problems. These opportunities provide the foundation for mental growth. We don't have to worry about keeping children "on track" during the day because they are already pursuing activities they find interesting. In contrast, programs that follow routines based on adult needs — or follow no routine at all — take away children's sense of control. They become passive rather than active learners, always waiting for adults to tell them what they can do and when.

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During plan-do-review time, children plan what they want to do, carry out their plans, and reflect on what they've done and learned.

The daily routine provides a social framework. It sets the stage for the social interactions that develop during the day. Children know that at certain times of the day they will have the opportunity to work alone, with one other child, or with a group of children. This predictability is particularly important for young children who may be separating from home for the first time. They come to depend on a regular sequence of events as much as they come to trust the familiar faces of the people in the setting. The predictability of the daily routine creates a sense of security and control for children as they become part of a community that shares activities within the same time frame.

The daily routine provides a flexible structure. It is an alternative to a rigid structure on one hand and a totally unpredictable structure on the other hand. While the order of events in a HighScope daily routine is predictable, what happens within each part of the routine is determined by children's needs and interests. As the day unfolds, we think about whether we're providing children with the experiences they need for all-around development. When special events are planned — such as a field trip or a holiday celebration — we remember to prepare them beforehand, since knowing what to expect helps children enjoy a full range of learning experiences.

How is the day organized in a HighScope setting?

HighScope provides guidelines about the types of experiences that should be part of every program's daily routine. Using these guidelines, each HighScope program decides on the daily routine that works best in its setting, based on the program's hours of operation, the ages of the children, and other factors.

- **Plan-do-review time.** This three-part sequence — the longest block of time in the day — is unique to the HighScope approach to educating children. It begins with a 10–15 minute time during which children plan with us what they want to do during work time (the area, materials, and friends to play with); a 45–60 minute work time for carrying out their plan; and another 10–15 minutes for reviewing and recalling (sharing and discussing what they've done and learned). Generally, the older the children, the longer and more detailed their planning and review times become. As children organize their intentions into plans, we may help them record the plans in some way. They may also share their plans with the other children in their small group.

During work time (the “do” part of the sequence), children carry out their plans, which may stay the same, shift, or even change completely as they work. Children are very active and purposeful during this time because they are following their own interests. (It is rare to see children wandering around at loose ends in HighScope settings!) At the end of work time, children clean up by putting away materials or storing unfinished projects. They may use

a “work-in-progress” sign to indicate their intention to continue working on their project the next day.

During review time, children meet with the same teacher and group to share and discuss what they have done. Reviewing their experiences helps children reflect on and learn from their actions. Also, as children share their plans, actions, and experiences during planning and review time, they expand their vocabularies, add details, and learn to express their ideas to others in more complex sentences.

- **Small-group time.** During small-group time, children experiment with materials and solve problems. Although most small-group activities are planned around particular learning content areas, children are free to use the materials we supply in any way they want during this time. Typically, a small group of children and a teacher meet in a variety of locations — around the table, on the floor, or outdoors. Small-group time offers children an opportunity to use new materials and to explore familiar materials in a new way. Throughout small-group time, children talk to us about what they are doing. They also share their ideas and investigations with one another. The length of small-group time varies with the age, interests, and attention span of the children. At the end of the period, children help clean up.
- **Large-group times.** Large-group times build a sense of community for children. The whole class, including the teachers, comes together for movement and music activities, storytelling, and other shared experiences. As with other time periods during a High-Scope day, children have many opportuni-

ties to make choices about how they will carry out the large-group activity and to express their personal preferences and inventiveness. Although adults generally initiate the large-group activity, children are always given the opportunity to be leaders. They offer countless suggestions — for example, the words or gestures for a simple chant — and enjoy having others pick up on their ideas.

- **Outside time.** The whole group spends at least 30 minutes outside every day so that children can enjoy vigorous and often noisy play in the fresh air. Without the constraints of four walls, children feel more free to make large movements and experiment with the full range of their voices. They run, climb, swing, roll, jump, yell, and sing with all their might. During extreme weather or when other unsafe conditions are present, we try to find an alternative indoor location for similar experiences. Outside time also gives children a chance to experience the wonders of nature. Collecting; gardening; and examining insects, trees, and flowers are often part of children’s outdoor explorations.
- **Transition times.** Transition times — the minutes between blocks of the day as well as during drop-off and pickup times — are when children move from one period to another. Since transitions set the stage for how children will enter the next segment of their day, our

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goal is to make these times pass as smoothly as possible. Transition times can also be useful learning times. Whenever possible, we give children choices about how they will make the transition. For example, each child may choose whether to crawl, hop, or jump across the floor on the way to small-group time. With a consistent daily routine, it is not unusual for the children themselves to announce what is happening next and to initiate transition activities.

- **Eating and resting times.** Mealtimes and snacktimes allow children to enjoy eating healthy food in a supportive social setting; resting time is for quiet, solitary activities. Since both of these experiences happen at home as well as at school, staff try to respect family customs at these times as much as possible. The main goal, however, is to create a shared and secure sense of community within the program.

How can families follow a daily routine at home?

Since children as well as adults benefit from a consistent, predictable daily routine at work or school, all members of a family will benefit from a regular routine in the home. A family's weekend routine may differ from the weekday one, but as long as they are both consistent children will learn important concepts about time. When there is a need to go off-schedule, for example during a vacation or an illness, we recommend that parents explain to their children why there is a change, tell them when they expect things to return to the normal routine, and help them keep track of when this will happen. Parents will discover that when their children know when something will happen, they feel more secure and become more able to regulate their own behavior and take responsibility for it.

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