

# ON OUR SLEEVES<sup>®</sup>

The Movement to Transform Children's Mental Health

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## How to help kids develop healthy habits

Habits are so important to mental health because they impact how we think, act, feel and behave. Habits make our lives easier! And when those habits are disrupted (ahem, COVID), it can take a toll on us and lead to:

- Mental fatigue
- Frustration
- Worse overall functioning

Especially right now, it's important to develop healthy habits. When we have major disruptions (like COVID), it can take a toll on our mental health and takes us away from other things we want to be doing. For our children, remembering to wash hands more frequently, wear a mask when required, and transition between home and school for learning if they are asked to do so, will be especially difficult this year. They will spend extra time and energy trying to remember where to go, what to do, and what not to do, even more than a typical start to the school year!

### What are some examples of a habit?

- Your morning routine!
  - Bathroom
  - Brush teeth
  - Get dressed
  - Eat breakfast

◦ Let the dog out  
◦ Get your backpack/purse/work bag

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## How can you help kids form good habits?

Follow the 3 R's – and remember to start easy and make small steps toward the goal!

- **Reminder** (the trigger to start the action)
  - Make it visual.
  - A calendar or checklist works great. Put it on the fridge or in their room.
  - Parents will need to give reminders at the start.
- **Routine** (the action you want to take)
  - Make sure kids know specifically what they are expected to do.
  - Practice together.
  - Make sure they are capable.
- **Reward** (what you get for doing the action)
  - Have the new behavior be rewarding to your child.
  - Offer something special when the new routine is completed.
  - This should be small, but meaningful:
    - 2 pieces of small candy
    - Extra screen time (10 minutes or so)
    - Penny in the jar to earn something bigger at the end of the week



3R'S

# How can you put it into practice?

Here's an example of how you can build a new daily routine for home learning.

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- **Reminders**

- Make a daily checklist of activities that need to be completed.
- Print out or draw (get the kids involved too).
- Post it somewhere obvious.
- Provide verbal cues about what is next and what has been completed.

- **Routine**

- Specify what each activity means throughout the day:
  - Cell phones put away unless being used for learning activity.
  - 30 minutes on math means complete your daily worksheets.
  - Study sight words for 15 minutes.
  - Log in for virtual classroom at 10:55 a.m.
  - Take a break from 10 to 10:30 a.m. for free time.

- **Reward**

- Offer both short-term and longer-term rewards.
- A 30-minute free time break can be part of the reward.
- Older kids might get access to their phones periodically during the school day.

## Healthy Habits Checklist

Although the schedule is different for everyone, we have created a few checklists to get you started for days with home learning and days with in-person school. You can use these as a guide to create checklists for your family to help form new healthy habits for the upcoming school year, not matter what form that takes.

# ON OUR SLEEVES Habits Checklist

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## Days learning at home

- Consistent wake up time
- Eat breakfast
- Shower
- Get dressed
- Brush teeth/comb hair
- Sit down at special workspace for school
  - Put electronics away unless using for learning
- Log on to classroom website
- Complete school work in 1-2 subject areas
- Break for free time from 10am to 10:30am
- Complete school work in 1-2 subject areas
- Break for lunch
- Chores
  - List the chores for each day
- Finish school work and put away (Suggest finishing before typical school day would be over)
- Play time
- Consistent bed time

## Other things to consider including:

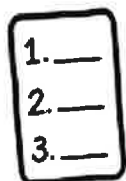
- Practicing a sport or other skill
- Experiential learning - outside, at a park, science experiments
  - <https://www.sciencefun.org/kidszone/experiments/>
  - <https://www.weareteachers.com/easy-science-experiments/>
- Homework time (if applicable)
- Practice or learn musical instrument
- Art time
- Mindfulness exercises - [OnOurSleeves.org/get-involved/gratitude](https://www.onoursleeves.org/get-involved/gratitude)

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## Download the At Home Guide

([https://www.nch.giving/images/on-our-sleeves-052020/documents/w213704\\_healthy-habits-checklist-at-home.ashx?la=en&hash=DA77A220F2F675E4FEDFBA3FECB023B3](https://www.nch.giving/images/on-our-sleeves-052020/documents/w213704_healthy-habits-checklist-at-home.ashx?la=en&hash=DA77A220F2F675E4FEDFBA3FECB023B3))



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### Days in school

Before school

After school

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- Eat breakfast
- Shower
- Get dressed
- Brush teeth/comb hair
- Pack backpack and leave by the door
- Pack lunch and place in/next to backpack
- Find mask, make sure to have an extra in your bag
- Wash hands
- Place mask(s) in the basket by the door
- Unpack backpack, place lunchbox on the counter
- Change clothes
- Play time
- Consistent bed time

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## Download the In School Guide

(/-/media/nch/giving/images/on-our-sleeves-052020/documents/w213704\_healthy-habits-checklist-inschool.ashx?la=en&hash=3D6884263559296389B585436327EF0C)

## How can I help my kid break a bad habit?

To break a bad habit, the process is like forming a new habit – but in reverse!

- **Remove the reminder**
  - Put the tablet or TV remote in a cupboard
- **Break the routine** (make it difficult to do so!)
  - Move the tablet or TV remote to a different area of the house
- **Remove the reward** (don't reward the behavior)
  - Only allow kids to watch programming you approve of so they don't get the reward of watching their favorite show every time they sit down.

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Nationwide Children's Hospital  
The Movement to Transform Children's Mental Health  
700 Childrens Drive  
Columbus, OH 43205

1 (855) 902-5437 (tel:18559025437)

## Links

**Donate** ([https://give.nationwidechildrens.org/site/Donation2;jsessionid=00000000.app362b?df\\_id=3344&mfc\\_pref=T&3344.donation=form1](https://give.nationwidechildrens.org/site/Donation2;jsessionid=00000000.app362b?df_id=3344&mfc_pref=T&3344.donation=form1))

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**Feedback** (/feedback)

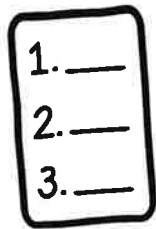
**Media Center** (/about/media-center)

**Nationwide Children's Hospital** (/-/media/nch/giving/images/on-our-sleeves-1010/icons/tipografiaramis--colonmono.ashx?la=en&hash=16BAC7F5340AF739D0DD1FD507FD16B1) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. (EIN: 31-1036370)

If you or your child need immediate help due to having suicidal thoughts, go to your local emergency room immediately, call the Nationwide Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or you can reach the Crisis Text Line by texting "START" to 741-741.

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# Healthy Habits Checklist

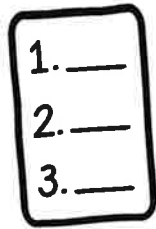
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