

Introduction ([00:03](#)):

Welcome to Be Evolved, a podcast for parents and educators who prioritize developing possibility and expansion within the total educational process for themselves and their children or students. We invite you to listen to the podcast with your child or student in mind and with yourself at the center of the learning experience. Ultimately, our goal is to bridge the gap between educational expertise and research, translating it into practical action. Gaining knowledge plus taking action is what it means to be evolved.

Becky Reback ([00:40](#)):

Hello and welcome to the August, 2025 Evolve Education Company podcast. I am not Mary Miele. I'm Becky Reback. I'm so happy to be here this month talking to you about all things coming back from summer vacation, getting started in school, getting those routines started. We just had an amazing conversation between Mary and Amy talking about how to get ready and geared up for back to school. And I'm here today with a quick podcast episode to give you some tips and tricks on how to set up a strong routine and make sure that you start your year off on the right foot so that way everybody feels really successful in the beginning of the school year. So I'm just going to jump right in. As I said, I'm Becky Reback. I am the director of Academic Assessments and Parent Education here at Evolved Education Company. I also do school placement support.

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So I kind of dabble in all the areas of evolved education. And today I really want to talk about one of the most powerful tools that we have for back to school success, and that is routines. So I've broken down this information into three different parts. I want to think about how to think about routines as a family, why past routines might have failed, and how to build ones that will stick. And then also practical actionable tips that you can start using today to build your routine for back to school at home. So the first thing that we want to think about is how we are dividing up the types of routines that we have. When we think about back to school routines, it's really easy to focus on just the child or each individual child in your family, but really this is about an entire family system.

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And so there are a couple of categories I want families to consider when you're thinking about building your family routine. So you need to think about what is the flow of your home? What does your morning look like? What does after school look like? What does it look like before bedtime in your house? When are your kids waking up in the morning? Are they independent with brushing their teeth, getting dressed, packing up? What does afternoon look like? Do they have activities? Do they need a snack, homework, downtime, chores? What happens once they walk in the door and your evening structure? What happens at bedtime if they're older? Are you doing any type of bedtime with them or are they just in their room getting themselves to sleep? How do you wind down from activities and the day do they read, do a meditation? So there's that whole family routine structure, and you really do need to think about what is happening in your family to make sure everybody is following the same type of structure.

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So there's peace and everyone is simpatico in the home. And then there's the individual routines. So what does each child in your family, if you have more than one, what does each child need based on their age, their temperament, their learning style? So when we're thinking about age appropriate and individual, I'm sorry, when we're thinking about individual routines, we're thinking about age appropriate responsibilities. So yes, we want to build those good executive function routines that help with packing the backpack and getting your homework done, but then there's also routines and in your home that you want to build. So what are some age appropriate responsibilities? Are there clear expectations for helping out within the home? We think about our home environment. Is there a dedicated workspace for the children? Does each child have their own workspace or do they share a workspace? Is that workspace going to be clutter free?

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What do you do to manage the transitions in your home? Are you just yelling across the house? Do you have timers? Do you have checklists? Where do things go? Right? Do you have a parking lot for your backpacks, your jackets, your shoes to avoid all that chaos? All of this needs to go into thinking about the family and individual routine so that way you can set everything and everyone up for success. And then of course, we always want to be thinking about how our children learn best. Are they visual learners? Are they kinesthetic learners? And we're going to talk a little bit more about this later on when I give you some actionable tips. But when you're thinking about individual children and how you're setting up their routines at the start of the school year, it is important to think about how they learn. If they're kinesthetic, maybe you need to have some type of chart where they're physically moving the task that they have just done to complete with a Velcro or something like that so they can hear it, they can feel it, they can physically do the task of completing whatever that is on their chart.

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If they're visual learners, then we want to have a chart. Maybe we'll have pictures. Maybe we have the chart in multiple rooms depending on how many rooms they go into in the morning or the afternoon. So thinking about the individual child, and then of course, as the family as a whole is going to help us set up our routines for success, we want to think about why routines don't stick and then how to actually make them stick. So have you ever set up a great routine only to abandon it a week or two weeks later? Maybe you googled some ideas and you thought they would really work and they didn't, right? You are not alone in this. Even I have trouble sticking to routines sometimes because they haven't been realistic or they just didn't work for my family, and there's a lot of reasons why it happens, and I want to talk about why that not sticking to a routine happens and how we can potentially avoid that this year.

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So one idea that we have of why a routine might not work is that we try to do too much at once. We need to scale it back and think about what is the biggest pain point in our day and focus on setting up a really strong routine for that time of day first. So maybe that's the morning as you're getting out the door to school. Maybe it's the afternoon when they're coming home in between activities or maybe it's bedtime. Work on one time of day at a time and really get that routine down before you're trying to revamp your entire day. Another reason it doesn't stick is we don't involve our kids. It's so important to have our kids be a part of building this routine, whether it's for the family or for themselves. We want them to be a part of it. We want their perspective.

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Even children as young as two, three years old can give some perspective on what might work for them in that moment when they're building the routine. So we want to sit down with a calendar, ask them what works, and it also helps build their ownership over staying on track with completing their tasks and sticking to the routine. And then of course, one huge reason that our routines don't stick is we ignore the goal. We don't really ask ourselves what we're trying to accomplish. And that is so important. So when you're sitting down with yourself or your partner or your kids to think about what routine you want to build, you want to think about what your end goal is, and that will help us set us all up for success. So do we want smoother transitions between waking up in the morning and breakfast and going to school?

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Do we want the kids that are old enough to be doing their homework independently? Are we working on accountability around the house with chores or time management? What is our goal and how are we going to incorporate all the steps to reach that goal so our routine stays successful? And of course, we are overestimating what is realistic. As parents, we need to be a very big part of maintaining that routine. And if a parent cannot stay on track with it, it's not going to last. So you as a parent really need to take a look at what your bandwidth is and what is realistic for you to manage, especially when you have younger kids

and implement routines that are actually going to be realistic. So taking it one small step at a time is going to be your best friend in this situation. Now we want to get to those practical, actionable tips for real life.

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So there are a bunch of ways I recommend setting up routines. So the first thing that I always like to think about is when are we going to prep for all of the things that we need each day? Sometimes people like to prep the night before. They help their kids pick out their clothes. They maybe pack as much as they can in the backpack as possible. They might prepare their lunch. Maybe they sit down and review the calendar with their children so the children know what's happening the next day. Or if your kids are teenagers, invite them to your shared calendar so they can see everything that's happening the next day. We also need to think about what parents are going to be responsible for completing versus what the child is going to be responsible for completing routines. Chores structure is a really great in service of building executive function and having the children be a part of that and giving them specific tasks to complete is going to help build that.

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So for example, my second grader in the morning has to pack up her backpack, so that includes her homework folder, her lunch, her water bottle, any clothes or tennis rackets or whatever materials she needs for any afterschool activities, she has to do that in the morning. And so we sort of work backwards from the time she has to be ready to go. And I always build in a five minute buffer. So I tell her she needs to be ready five minutes earlier than when we actually need to leave. So it gives us that buffer so we don't end up fighting in the morning and we sit down and we work backwards from there and think about how we're going to manage our time and make sure that we have everything packed up. And this is also a little bit on me because I'm the one actually packing her lunch, so I need to be done at a certain time in order for her to pack up her backpack successfully.

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One of my favorite things that I do in my home is I build a launchpad. So this can be a mud room, this could be a closet, whatever makes sense in your home, your apartment, in your house, whatever it is. But it's one spot for all the things school related. So that includes their backpacks, their shoes, their jackets, their instruments. If you are living in a home, I have bins in my garage that have all the sports equipment so the kids know where to go and get that. I have in the area where my kids get their jackets and their backpacks, and I hang them on hooks so that they can reach, so they know when it is time to get packed up for school. They know exactly where everything is, and this is also the place they need to put it back when they get home from school.

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And if something's not there, I have taught into the routine of our launchpad, so they know that if something's not there, it's on them because they didn't put it back there. So we're starting to take some of the onus off of the parents and building the routine where the kids are independent and responsible for their own things. Let's talk about a homework space. A homework space is so important. We need to make sure that our kids have a dedicated workspace that is going to be a place where they feel really good, comfortable in order to be successful in completing their homework. So what does that place look like? It's going to be a hard surface, a desk, a table, something like that. They're not working on their laps on the couch. We want to make sure that every day when we get to our homework space, we take five minutes to set up their space.

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We check and make sure that all the materials that they need to complete their homework are there. Do they have their computer, their textbooks, their calculator? The space itself should always be stocked with paper and scissors and pens and pencils so that way they can just grab it and start working. They don't need to look around the house for a pencil. So that all is going to be very important. I always want to

make sure that my kids are fed before they start working, so that way they're not sitting and eating a snack while they're working and getting their homework all dirty and they have fuel in their body and in their brain to actually do the work. And then we can think about once we've set up their space and their space set up as successful, how are we actually going to get this work done?

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Maybe you have a kid that's going to sit down and just work through everything, and that's great, but most of our kids are not going to do that. So I really like to use a visual timer just to say, okay, we're going to work for 15 minutes on your math homework, or we know that all of your homework takes 45 minutes, so I'm going to set the timer for 45 minutes, and this is going to be your work time. If you have a child that needs the time broken down a little bit more, and they don't like to just work for one big block of time, I love to use the Pomodoro method. And this is where we set a timer and we work for a specific period of time, and then we take a break. So even if you're in the middle of a task, we stop when the timer stops and we take a break.

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So in the beginning, you might set it up for shorter work periods, maybe 10 minute work periods, and you take a three or four minute break. And then as they build their stamina for working, you can lengthen it. Ideally working up to about 25 minutes of work time with a five minute break. And then we need to teach into what the break looks like. So we're not going to get up and go watch tv. Five minutes of TV is never enough, but we could go bounce a basketball, we could draw something. We could do jumping jacks and pushups. So something that's going to kind of switch their brain from the work mode, and then they can sit down and go back to working and feeling really good about the work that they're doing. They know they only need to work for short bursts of time.

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Of course, we want to make sure that our bedrooms and common areas remain neat, tidy, and clean. So we want to think about those age appropriate chore routines. So that can include unloading the dishwasher. That can include clearing the plate, that can include making their own lunches. That can include putting their clothes away when the laundry is done. There's so many ways that we can do this and build in those chores and routines to help build responsibility and manage time management for our kids. Then of course, we want to make it friendly for the kids. So if we're giving them a checklist, maybe we want to add pictures or maybe we want to do check boxes, something that's going to physically help them understand that they have completed a task, because that's a really good feeling. And then as we're thinking about routines, we want to think about tracking and celebrating our progress.

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I always like to work in rewards for our kids. I think that not everyone is intrinsically motivated and having a little bit of external motivation isn't a bad thing. So rewards don't have to be big or excessive. You can think extra 10 minutes of TV time. You can think a family game night, a sticker chart. Little things really go a long way. Ice cream with mom or dad or both choosing what we're having for dinner on Thursday night. All of that can be worked into what a reward is for completing all of their tasks. In the beginning. You maybe want to do it daily, and then you can space it out so that way we're building up the tolerance for doing these tasks without needing to be rewarded. And then I like to always have a family meeting. People suggest weekly. I do think weekly feels like a lot.

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I would say once a month, have a family meeting. Check in on the routines that we've set up, what's working, what needs to change, what feels good, what doesn't feel good, and make adjustments as we go. Remember, no routine is set in stone. Adjust it as your child and your family grows, and that is how you will stick to a successful routine. So returning to school can feel really overwhelming, but with routines rooted in your family's real needs and with your child's input, you can really set the stage for more

confidence, more independence, and a lot less chaos in your home. Thank you so much for joining me today. I hope this helped you think about setting up your routines as you go back to school. It's a really great time to reset everything, and if you think you're not sure of where to begin or how to work with your child, this is something that I'm here to support and help with as part of the parent education service that we have at Evolved. I love to help families think about their routines and how their child learns best and how we can set everything up for success. So please don't hesitate to reach out to [becky@evolveded.com](mailto:becky@evolveded.com) and I can help you set up your family's routine as you're thinking about going back to school and helping you maintain and stick to a really strong structure in your home. Thank you.

Introduction ([16:57](#)):

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