

# Week 2 Reading Assignment

## *Infant Components of Daily Routine*



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## Components of the Daily Routine

For infant programs, the basic parts of the daily routine include arrival/greeting; snacks and meals; bodily care; naptime; choice time; group time (including music and movement); outside time; and departure. Transitions (the interval between components, including cleanup) are also part of the day and should be kept to a minimum.

### *Arrival/Greeting time*

At arrival time, warm leisurely greetings from caregivers help to assure infants that even though their parents must leave, they are in the hands of trustworthy people who will respect them and keep them safe until their parents return.

Even when a child care setting has a greeting area, there is no definite place where greetings and good-byes must take place. Where they occur depends on the needs and preferences of the child and parent.

### *Snacks and meals*

Babies' feedings and children's mealtimes go beyond fulfilling a basic need for nourishing food. For infants, these times provide close physical contact with an attentive adult. When a young infant's cries of hunger are met with a full bottle and the comforting arms of a pleasant caregiver, that child is able to grow and thrive because he or she learns to trust the world as a place where people recognize and respond to that child's needs. For the older infant, mealtime is a time to eat but also to explore new tastes, smells, and textures and to try self-feeding with fingers, a spoon, or a cup.

## Infant Components of Daily Routine (continued)

Where a feeding or a mealtime takes place depends on the stage of the child involved. Generally, a primary caregiver of young infants holds each child and attends to his or her bottle-feeding while sitting in a comfortable place. Some infants, content with this close contact and attention, focus intently on their bottle and caregiver, with little or no regard for where they are and what is going on around them. Other infants, who are easily distracted and continually turning away from the bottle to watch other children and adults, may have a more productive feeding in a fairly secluded place.

Infants who are sitting and beginning to try solid foods are generally propped up in some way while the caregiver offers food on a spoon. Older infants who are interested in picking up finger foods, guiding the spoon to their mouth, or exploring food with their hands, usually sit on low chairs or on the floor to eat at low one-person tables.

### ***Bodily care***

In an active learning setting, caregivers approach bodily care routines from a child's perspective. This means, first of all, respecting whatever the child is already doing at the time bodily care becomes necessary. Instead of swooping down and briskly carrying a child off to the changing table for an efficient diaper change and hand washing, for example, caregivers first try to enter the child's current experience. Although bodily care will disrupt that experience, it is possible to lessen the impact of this disruption by giving children some advance indication of their need for a diaper change or potty break and then giving them some time to come to a stopping point in their play.

In a child care setting, bodily care consistently takes place in the diapering and dressing areas and the child-oriented bathrooms. For infants and toddlers,

## Infant Components of Daily Routine (continued)

the brief routines of bodily care — diaper changes, dressing, washing, and using the potty or toilet — occur frequently and fairly regularly throughout the day. This means whenever children are wet or soiled and before and/or after eating and napping — generally every hour or so, depending on the age, health, and habits of the child. At the most basic level, these routines promote cleanliness, physical comfort, and health by minimizing children's exposure to infection and diaper rash, but they can also contribute to children's emotional well-being. Through the gentle, one-to-one interactions involved in bodily care, children have an opportunity to build trusting relationships with caregivers and gain a sense of security in the care setting. Also, during the process of washing, diapering, dressing, and undressing, infants and toddlers begin to sense how their own bodies can bend and move.

### *Naptime*

Naptime in an infant-toddler program occurs on demand, when children tire, and as a regularly scheduled part of the day. Naps provide the sleep and rest that are necessary for children's growth and development. Like adults, tired children are often cranky and irritable; sleep helps refresh and recharge them. It also provides a quiet retreat from the intensely social demands of the child care setting. In short, napping allows children to reenergize physically and emotionally for the next part of the day.

Although an infant or toddler may fall asleep anywhere in the center — in a caregiver's arms, in a cozy armchair, under the climber — caregivers usually move the child to continue and complete the nap in a cradle, basket, crib, or cot. This

## Infant Components of Daily Routine (continued)

practice frees caregivers to attend to wakeful children; protects the sleeping child from being stepped on by peers at play; and consistently provides each child with a personal, familiar sleeping place.

### *Choice time*

Choice time is a sustained block of time when infants and toddlers can investigate and explore materials and actions and interact with their peers and caregivers. In a supportive and safe environment that affords interesting materials and opportunities as well as open space to move freely in various ways, each child chooses what to do based on personal interests, inclinations, and level of development and ability. Choice time provides children with a virtually uninterrupted period of



*This caregiver knows that this infant likes to hold on to his favorite toy and be rocked while he falls asleep.*

## Infant Components of Daily Routine (continued)

exploration and play. A great deal of learning occurs at choice time. Through their self-chosen sensory-motor explorations, infants and toddlers engage in experiences that support learning in all the KDI content areas.

Choice time takes place in the thoughtfully equipped and arranged infant and toddler indoor play spaces. Throughout choice time, infants and toddlers move about, explore materials and actions, and play near and with peers and caregivers. They do all of this at their own pace, according to their individual interests and abilities. Nonmobile infants make their choices from an array of appealing materials caregivers place within their reach. They also sometimes stop to watch other infants and older children and to perhaps babble or gesture toward them or cry.

The choices and possibilities for exploration and play are greater for mobile infants. They may crawl or creep to a shelf of books or toys and choose one to examine. They may carry things in their mouth or hand as they crawl, or they might sit beside a shallow pan and dabble their hands in water or pat sand. As they move about the play space, they may seek another child to play beside. They might choose to interact with a caregiver in a simple game of peekaboo, drop the spool, or bang the blocks.

### ***Group times***

Group times are caregiver-initiated parts of the day that include opportunities for children to engage in active learning. *Caregiver-initiated* means the caregiver has an idea for the activity and plans what might happen based on mobile infants' and toddlers'

## Infant Components of Daily Routine (continued)

interests and development. The purpose of group time is *not* to instruct children in some area of knowledge or have them practice a skill, nor is it intended to enforce social interaction. Rather, group time allows children who are interested to explore materials and actions, and if they choose, to observe, imitate, or play alongside others. A child's participation in group time is wholly voluntary.

Group times generally focus on either exploring and using materials or enjoying songs, nursery rhymes, and movement and music activities. During a typical group time, one or two caregivers gather with the older infants and toddlers. The group is small — generally with no more than four children per caregiver and no more than eight children altogether. The adult gets the activity started and encourages children to use materials or move their bodies in their own way.

Typically, smaller groups engage in exploring materials while larger groups join in a music or movement activity. However, there are no hard-and-fast rules. There may even be as few as two children in a group, depending on how many choose to participate. This small group size makes it easier for even quiet or withdrawn children to join in, enables children to have close physical contact with their caregiver, and allows the caregiver to pay close attention to each child while monitoring the tenor of the group as a whole. It is a daily opportunity for children and caregivers to communicate in an intimate social setting as they share or use common materials or enjoy moving together to music.

## Infant Components of Daily Routine (continued)

### *Outside time*

Outside time allows infants and toddlers to extend their exploration and play to an outdoor setting. As at choice time indoors, children make choices about what to do outdoors. Children find the outdoors rich in sensory-motor experiences for constructing new knowledge.

During outside time, infants and toddlers observe, explore, and play on their own or with others at their own pace and level of interest and development. They can freely move, throw things, and play in water and snow. Spending time outdoors in all seasons positively affects the way even very young children eat, sleep, and feel.

For infants, the outdoor play space includes materials and equipment that encourage movement, things that flutter in the wind, a variety of crawling surfaces, waterplay materials, and objects that are visually interesting.

### *Transitions*

While some children handle transitions more easily than others, any shift in tempo or focus can be stressful on bodies and minds already deeply engrossed with everything around them. Therefore, caregivers minimize the number of transitions by dividing the day into large blocks of time. They also try to ease children's transitions from one major part of the day to the next.

## Infant Components of Daily Routine (continued)

It is important for caregivers to avoid having children line up or sit waiting for the next event without anything to do. In general, caregivers provide time and support for children as they shift gears to move from one regular daily event to another.

### ***Departure***

At departure time, the caregivers' pleasant, friendly good-byes and warm wishes for return allow children to reunite with their parents; they are relieved to see their families and, at the same time, know that the adults saying good-bye care about them. As a result, they leave feeling comfortable with the idea of returning to the center the next day.

The end of the day is an opportunity for caregivers to interact with children and parents in nurturing ways. They understand that infants and family members need time and space to reunite and they respect the importance of that relationship. Caregivers often use this time to share something positive about the infant's day with the person(s) picking up the child, such as a toy he or she particularly enjoyed playing with. As the family heads home, a parent is further reassured by seeing a warm "good-bye" interaction between the caregiver and the infant, knowing the child will be welcomed back the next day.

Depending on the length of the program day, each component between arrival and departure may occur once or several times. As children gradually

## Infant Components of Daily Routine (continued)

become accustomed to the daily routine, they will feel reassured and increasingly confident. Older infants and young toddlers may begin to anticipate the next part of the day. Even the youngest infants benefit from being alerted that a transition is about to occur; it gives them a sense of control over their environment. Sample plans for full-day and half-day infant programs are available in the appendix of the book (Appendixes G and H); In addition, there are two sample routines: one for an infant program (Appendix I) and one for a mixed-age program (Appendix J).

As you construct your daily routine, remember to be consistent yet flexible! Children thrive on following a familiar routine that is closely connected to their routine biological needs. Because infants are so



*Touching and mouthing are common ways for babies to explore and learn about objects.*

## Infant Components of Daily Routine (continued)

young, it is important that schedules remain flexible to allow time for extra naps, longer meals, and transitions that respond to the individual pace of the children. Consistent yet flexible schedules can minimize stress for young children while increasing their comfort level, enjoyment, and learning outcomes in group care.

