

THE DAD SYSTEM



The Complete Morning Routine System

Pregnancy Through Age 12 · Evidence-Based · Print & Laminate

Morning sunlight within 1 hour anchors the whole day's circadian rhythm.

Montessori independence at age 1 builds lifelong executive function.

The morning is **won the night before**.

Every tool the science supports — built to scale 1 to 6+ kids.


★ **Start at ANY Stage — Consistency Is What Matters**

INDEPENDENCE PROGRESSION



WHAT MAKES THIS SYSTEM DIFFERENT

 **Montessori Core**
Independence from age 1

 **Affirmations Daily**
Identity built every AM

 **Buy It Used First**
Sustainable + heirloom

From "The Optimized Father" by Darnell Dallas



Full Guide + Products
thedadsystem.org/morningroutine



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Phase 0: Pregnancy Mornings

Third Trimester · Mom's Foundation = Baby's Foundation

☀️ MORNING LIGHT = CIRCADIAN ANCHOR FOR MOM + BABY

Sunlight within 30 min of waking · 10–15 min outdoors

Anchors maternal cortisol rhythm. **Circadian signals cross the placenta** — baby's clock is forming NOW. Dark climate: 10,000 lux therapy lamp 20–30 min.

Wake 5:30–6:30 AM · Same time daily (incl. weekends)

Consistency > perfect time. Stable wake time predicts smoother newborn sleep + lower PPD risk.

💧 HYDRATION + NUTRITION FIRST HOUR

💧 16 oz water before coffee · Add electrolytes if nauseous

LMNT 🏆 or Nuun Sport 💰. Plasma volume up ~50% in pregnancy — dehydration = fatigue + Braxton-Hicks.

🔍 Protein-forward breakfast within 60 min

Stabilizes blood sugar → ↓nausea, ↓gestational diabetes risk. Eggs, Greek yogurt, oats + nut butter, cottage cheese.

💊 Prenatal + Omega-3 (DHA) with breakfast

FullWell 🏆 or Nature Made Prenatal Multi+DHA 💰 + Nordic Naturals Prenatal DHA for fetal brain/eye development. Take WITH fat for absorption.

🧘 MOVEMENT BEFORE THE WORLD WAKES

10 min prenatal yoga + 4-7-8 breathing

Cat-cow, wide-knee child's pose, legs-up-wall. **4-7-8** (inhale 4 → hold 7 → exhale 8) × 4. 👤 Dad: do alongside.

20 min walk outdoors with Dad

Walking is labor-prep + bonding window. Even 5 min lowers maternal cortisol — which crosses the placenta.

💖 MOM'S MORNING DECLARATIONS

"My body knows how to do this. I am strong. My baby is safe. Today I take care of us both."

Speak aloud or to mirror. 👤 Dad: place hand on bump and add: **"You are loved. We can't wait to meet you."**

🎵 PRENATAL BONDING RITUAL (WEEK 30+)

Sing or play ONE song to the bump every morning

Newborns recognize melodies heard in utero — strongest sleep + soothe cue after birth. 👤 Dad sings too — baby hears your deeper voice clearly.

💛 **DAD'S MORNING JOB** · Wake first if possible. Pre-fill her water bottle. Plate her breakfast. Walk together. Cortisol shield = nervous system shield = baby's foundation. **Weeks 36+:** add 10-min hospital-bag check + birth-plan review weekly.



Phase 1: Newborn Mornings

0-6 Months · Light Anchors the Day

☀️ MORNING LIGHT PROTOCOL (MOST IMPORTANT STEP)

Open ALL curtains by 7:00 AM · Light = "day signal"
Even cloudy days work. Windows pass plenty of circadian wavelength even when filtering UV.

Baby outdoors within 1 hr of wake · 10-15 min indirect light
Front porch, balcony, stroller walk. **Melatonin pacemaker begins ~9 weeks; full circadian maturity by 2-3 yr.** This is when training "sticks."

🍼 FIRST FEED + DIAPER

First feed in bright natural light · Eye contact + voice
Light during feeds = "this is daytime feed." **20-30 sec unbroken eye contact** = oxytocin spike for both. Sing or read aloud during feed (1-2 min).

Diaper change in well-lit room · Talk through every step
"Now I'm taking off your diaper... now wiping..." **Child-directed speech** (Fernald, Stanford) → 18-mo-olds process words ~6 mo faster than peers. Morning narration is free vocabulary.

👶 MOVEMENT: TUMMY TIME + "OPEN BOOK"

3-5 min tummy time after every morning feed
Builds neck strength, prevents flat head, anchors morning as "active time." 👤 Dad chest tummy time = bonding + reflux-friendly.

"Open Book" massage strokes during AM diaper change
Flat hands sweep outward across chest. 1-2 min. Wakes baby gently + builds body awareness.

💖 AFFIRMATIONS OVER BABY (PARENT SPEAKS)

"You are loved. You are safe. You are strong. Today is a beautiful day."
Speak slowly during morning feed or diaper change. Tone > words. Baby reads your nervous system before words.

Wake: ~6:00-7:30 AM (feed-driven)

Schedule: 30-90 min wake windows · 14-17 hrs total sleep · Feed on demand

First hr: Light → feed → diaper → tummy time → contact nap

👨 DAD'S MORNING + TAG-TEAM

Hands-on dads' testosterone ↓~26% (Gettler 2011, *PNAS*); oxytocin matches moms' when dads do the work (Abraham 2014). Play sensitivity at age 2 → attachment at 16 (Grossmann). Whoever did 2-4 AM sleeps in; other takes 6-9 AM. Both need ≥4-hr unbroken. Sibling at 18 mo opens curtains.

⚡ SUNLESS / RAINY DAY PROTOCOL + STORAGE

Open ALL curtains — windows pass ~1,000-10,000 lux (plenty for circadian signal). Walk covered porch, mall, garage with door open. NO 10K therapy lights directly at infants — retinas developing. Sit baby NEAR (not facing) parent's therapy light at 4+ ft. **Storage:** breast milk = 4 hr room / 4 day fridge / 6 mo freezer · Formula = 1 hr from start / 24 hr fridge. **NO honey under 12 mo** (botulism).



Phase 2: Baby Mornings

6–12 Months · Solids + Predictable Rhythm

PREDICTABLE WAKE + LIGHT WINDOW

- Wake window: 6:00–7:00 AM (consistent ±30 min)**
Circadian system locks in by 6 mo if signals are consistent. **Same wake = same naps = same bedtime.** Greet with a **20-sec hug** — Field (Miami Touch Research): moderate-pressure touch ↓ cortisol + ↑ vagal tone in seconds.
- Outdoors 10–15 min within 1 hr of waking**
Stroller walk, porch time, backyard play mat. Even 5 min in indirect daylight = full circadian dose. **Vitamin D supplementation** 400 IU/day for breastfed + winter/high-latitude infants (AAP).

BREAKFAST SOLIDS (IRON + ALLERGENS)

- Iron-fortified cereal · Banana · Avocado · Sweet potato**
Iron stores deplete by 6 mo. Add Greek yogurt 7+ mo. Use **Avanchy stainless suction bowl** or **Bumkins silicone grip dish** .
- Introduce ONE allergen per morning · 2 hr observation**
Mornings = best window. **Once introduced, KEEP IT IN** (LEAP). One new food at a time so reactions are traceable.

ALLERGENS — BRIEF

AAP/NIAID — peanut + cooked egg AROUND 6 mo for ALL infants. **High-risk (severe eczema/egg allergy):** 4–6 mo with pre-test. LEAP-Trio (NEJM Evidence 2024): early peanut → **71% lower allergy at adolescence** (4.4% vs 15.4%). **9 major allergens** (sesame added 2023, FASTER Act). **Anaphylaxis:** hives, vomiting, hoarse cry, swelling, wheeze → EPI + 911 (EpiPen, Auvi-Q, or **neffy** nasal — needle-free, FDA 2024 ≥30kg / 2025 ≥15kg). Infant CPR class BEFORE solids. **Full schedule in Allergen PDF.**

MORNING MOVEMENT (10 MIN)

- Bicycle legs · Butterfly knees · Hip openers**
Builds core for crawling/walking. Sing through it — turns it into a daily ritual not a chore.
- Tummy time → seated practice → assisted standing**
10 min total broken into 2–3 mini-sessions across the morning.

AFFIRMATIONS OVER BABY (PARENT-LED)

"You are growing strong. You are safe. You are so loved. We're going to have a great day together."

Babies start absorbing tone of voice + facial affect by 6 mo. Smile while you say it.

Wake: 6:00–7:00 AM
First nap: ~9:00 AM (after 2–3 hr wake window)
Total sleep: 12–16 hrs/24h · 2–3 naps

DAD WINDOW

6–8 AM = peak Dad time before work. Solo morning bottle/breakfast/walk = independence for Mom + bonding for baby. Most predictable hour of the day.



Phase 3: Toddler Mornings

1–3 Years · The Independence Engine

O-SOJI + SDT

Japanese O-soji: **kids clean their own space**. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan): autonomy + competence + relatedness. 2-choice rule = autonomy. Pour-your-own = competence. 20-sec hug = relatedness. All three before 7 a.m.

SHE OWNS HER MORNING (HAND IT OVER)

Wake → Open curtains (her job) → Potty → Make bed

She walks to window. She pulls cord. She pulls up covers. **Ownership at 18 mo = compliance at 4**. See [The Potty System](#). **Greet at eye level + 20-sec hug** — opposite of Tronick Still-Face; Gottman: turning toward bids >86% = secure attachment.

Get-dressed station: 2 outfits she chooses from

Two-choice rule. "Red shirt or blue shirt?" — never "what do you want to wear?" Choice = ownership = no battles.

KITCHEN INDEPENDENCE (MONTESSORI PRACTICAL LIFE)

Learning Tower at counter · She participates in breakfast

[Sprout Kids Sous-Chef](#) 🏆 or [SDADI Step Stool](#) 💰. Multi-functional foldable: **two 6-in-1** for small spaces.

Pour from small pitcher · Stir oats · Spread butter

[APLAINR Pour Pitcher](#) 🏆. Spills = teaching, not failure. Cleanup is part of the work.

Butter knife · Wavy chopper (18 mo+) on banana, cooked egg

[doddl Toddler Utensils](#) 🏆. Sawing motion. Demonstrate, then hand off. **Always supervise. Full progression in Kitchen Safety Companion PDF.**

MUSIC · MOVEMENT · MINDFULNESS (5 MIN, PLAYFUL)

Family song + animal yoga: 🐱 → 🐶 → 🐸 → 🐸 → 😊

Same morning song daily (becomes the cue). Dad joins. Animal sounds. Repeat 2x through.

"Smell the flower 🌸 Blow the candle 🕯️ " × 3

Toddler-friendly belly breaths. Builds emotion regulation now (pays off in tantrum years).

TODDLER DECLARATIONS (REPEAT WITH HER)

"I am brave. I am kind. I am loved. Today is a good day."

Repeat 3x together — eye contact, smiling. Add a hand-on-heart gesture. By 24 mo she'll start saying them solo.

CHOKING — UNDER 4

Cut LENGTHWISE: grapes, hot dogs, cheese, tomatoes, meat. Avoid: popcorn, nuts, hard candy, marshmallows, raisins, chips, raw carrots. ~12,000 ER visits/yr (CDC); hot dogs = ~17% of food-choking deaths. **2025 AHA: 5 back blows + 5 abdominal thrusts** (chest for infants <1/pregnant). **Bystander CPR ~2x survival**. Full algorithm in Choking PDF.

Wake: 6:30–7:00 AM

Routine: Curtains → potty → dressed → kitchen → breakfast → teeth → outside → play

Out the door: By 8:30 AM (15-min buffer for a tantrum)



Phase 4: Preschool/K Mornings

3–6 Years · Self-Direction Begins

THE VISUAL ROUTINE CARD (PAGE 11)

- She follows the wall card · Visual timer = 10 min/task**
Hand over the printed routine. Dry-erase check-off. **Time Timer MOD** 🏆 — "when red is gone, next step." **Decision fatigue lives in the parent — kill it with a chart.**

BATHROOM + HAIR

- Brush 2 min · Wash hands 20 sec · Hair by type**
Sonicare Kids 🏆 + **RiseWell** hydroxyapatite. CDC 5-step handwash. Hair products matched 1a–4c (see products page).

GET DRESSED + SUN SALUTATION + BREATH

- Montessori closet · 2 outfits she chooses from**
homegroove Wardrobe + Mirror. Layout the night before. Two-choice rule defuses 80% of dressing battles.
- Sun Salutation 3× to her morning song + 3 belly breaths**
Mountain → Forward Fold → Cobra → Down Dog → Mountain. Then "smell flower 🌸 blow candle 🕯️" × 3 on **Florensi cushion.**

KID-SOLO AFFIRMATIONS · "I am strong. I am ready. I can do hard things. Today is a good day."

She says them solo at the mirror. Add: "**I am grateful for ___.**" = first step into journaling. Praise PROCESS (Dweek): "you worked hard" not "you're smart."

KITCHEN + LUNCH + BACKPACK

- Y-peeler (3+) · Paring knife with finger guard (5+)**
Opinel Le Petit Chef (rounded tip + ring) ages 5–10. **Claw grip mandatory.** Full progression in Kitchen Safety Companion PDF.
- Packs lunch from pre-stocked drawer + backpack on hook**
PlanetBox Rover 🏆 + **PackIt Freezable.** **State Bags Kane Kids** on her hook. Loaded the night before.

Wake: 6:30 AM · ~80% have dropped nap by age 5

Out the door: By 7:45 AM (15-min buffer) · Total sleep 10–13 hrs/24h

CHOICE WITHIN STRUCTURE · "Toast or oatmeal?" not "what do you want?" "Walk or scoot?" not "let's go." Two-choice rule defuses 80% of resistance.



Phase 5: School Age Mornings

6–12 Years · Full Self-Direction · Sibling Cascade Active

WAKE UP WITHOUT MOM & DAD

- Own alarm · 16 oz water · Cold splash on face**
Hatch Rest+ 🏆 / LittleHippo Mella 💰 . Stubborn? **Clocky**. Water before food. Cold water splash = vagal tone + parasympathetic activation = sharper focus.
- NO screens first 60 min · Phones OUT of bedroom (6+)**
Screens before sunlight = circadian disruption + dopamine baseline reset. **Model the rule**. Sleep needs 9–12 hrs (6–12 yr) — 7 AM wake = 9 PM lights out.

THE 0/25/100 RULE (AAP/AHA)

0

caffeine under 12 yr

25g

added sugar/day max (2–18)

100mg

caffeine ceiling 12–18 only

FULL STRETCH + SUN SALUTATION + POSTURE (5 MIN)

- 10 jumping jacks · Full Sun Salutation A · 30s plank · 1 min Mountain Pose**
Wakes body, raises core temp, blood to brain. Cortisol healthy boost = natural caffeine alternative. Mountain Pose hold = **subjective confidence boost** (Cuddy 2018 meta-analysis — felt-power effect replicated; the older hormone claim did not).

MOOD METER + GRATITUDE + INTENTION (BRACKETT RULER + GALINSKY) · 30 sec at the table: "**Where am I on the Mood Meter — high/low energy, pleasant/unpleasant?**" Then: "**Grateful for ____. Today I will ____. I am capable. I am loved.**"
Names the feeling = regulates the feeling (Brackett, Yale). The morning trains **Galinsky's 7 Essential Skills**: focus (cold splash), self-control (no screens), perspective-taking (sibling cascade), communicating (eye-level greeting), self-directed learning (visual checklist). Eat breakfast WITH them $\geq 5 \times / \text{wk}$ (Eisenberg 2004, $n=4,746$) — predicts lower depression, lower substance use, higher GPA.

INDEPENDENT KITCHEN + HYGIENE

- Microwave + toaster solo · Stovetop supervised → solo ~12 yr · Packs own lunch**
Knife: pinch + claw grip mastered. Reheat leftovers to 165°F. **Full Permission Ladder L1–L5 in Kitchen Safety Companion PDF.**
- Brushes 2 min · Flosses · Shows solo · Layers clothes for weather**
Twice-daily brushing locked by 6. Floss age 6+. Shows 10 min max. Window thermometer or kid weather app — rain/snow gear ready night before.

SIBLING CASCADE · **THE 66-DAY PROMISE** · **OWL VS LARK** · Older sibling helps younger dress/pack — teaching = mastery. Never make older sibling responsible for safety calls (911, choking, fire). **Habits take 66 days on average** (Lally 2010, range 18–254) — not 21. Missing a day doesn't reset. **~30% of kids are biological owls** (Roenneberg) — if your kid free-wakes after 7 AM on weekends, push school-day wake later in 15-min steps and adjust bedtime. AAP: middle/high school no earlier than 8:30. **Wake 6:00–6:30 AM · Out by 7:30 · 9–12 hrs sleep.**



Multi-Child Command Center

Scale 1 → 6+ Kids · Color-Coded System

THE HOBBS CREW COLOR-CODE

- Each child = one color · Applied across ALL gear**
Kid 1 = blue. Kid 2 = green. Kid 3 = red. **Toothbrush, towel, lunch box, water bottle, backpack, hooks, drawer.** Eliminates 80% of "WHOSE IS THIS?" arguments.
- Color-tape labels everywhere (waterproof masking)**
Kitchen drawers, bathroom hooks, laundry hampers, shoe slots. New kid = new color introduced once at family meeting.

THE FAMILY COMMAND CENTER (WALL SYSTEM)

- One spot · Calendar + chore chart + lunch list**
1Thrive Sarah / Harry / Susan 🏆 (modular wall) or DIY: **Apolosign 27" Digital Calendar + magnetic dry-erase calendar + wire wall basket + hook row.**
- Daily routine chart per kid · Their color, their checklist**
Mighty + Bright Daily Routines 🏆 or **JJPRO Magnetic Bedtime/Morning.** Magnetic flip = satisfying = compliance.


BATCH-PREP SUNDAY → SMOOTH MORNINGS


- Sunday: 6 overnight oats · 6 egg cups · 6 fruit bowls**
JBHO Overnight Oats Containers 🏆 or **Ball Mason Jars** 💰 . Each kid grabs theirs by color.
- Pre-stocked snack & sandwich drawer at kid height**
They make their own lunch. Pre-portioned bins. **Stasher Bags** reusable. **HiYZ Sandwich Sealer** 🏆 .


THE 15-MINUTE STAGGER


- Stagger wake-ups by age + speed**
Slowest dresser wakes 15 min earlier. Oldest helps youngest. Bathroom rotation = posted on door.

FAMILY SAFETY DRILLS (QUARTERLY) + FAMILY DECLARATION

 **Fire**
Two ways out per room · meeting place outside · practice ≥2x/yr (1 night drill)

 **911**
Age 4–5: name + address · Age 6+: dial on locked phone

 **Choking**
Both parents + sitters CPR-trained. **Bystander CPR ~2x pediatric survival** (Atkins 2009). Skills decay in 3 mo — 2-min monthly manikin drill maintains it. See Choking PDF.

 **Allergy**
Auto-injector (EpiPen, Auvi-Q, or **neffy** nasal — needle-free, FDA 2024/25) in kitchen + go-bag. Train all sitters.

 **FAMILY MORNING DECLARATION (ALL KIDS TOGETHER) · "We are a team. We help each other. Today we choose kindness, courage, and gratitude."**

Spoken in unison before walking out the door. 30 sec. Builds family identity. **Dad's hack:** "Ladder mornings" — one parent owns up-routine (wake/breakfast/dress), other owns out-the-door (lunches/bags/shoes). Switch weekly. Prevents nag burnout.



Meal Prep + Brain Fuel Breakfast

Sunday Batch · The 0/25/100 Rule · Independence-Built

🧠 THE BRAIN-FUEL FORMULA

☐ Protein + healthy fat + slow carb + color

Stable blood sugar = stable mood = focused school morning. **Target 15–25 g protein** for school-age (Leidy 2013–14) — high-protein breakfasts blunt mid-morning hunger AND attention drift on fMRI. Skip "kid cereal" sugar bombs. Eggs, yogurt, oats, nut butter, fruit.

☐ Hydrate first · Water before any food

Kids wake mildly dehydrated. **Pura Kiki** 🏆 / **Klean Kanteen** 💰 water bottles.

📊 THE 0 / 25 / 100 RULE

0

Caffeine
under 12 yr

25g

Added sugar
max/day, 2–18 yr

100mg

Caffeine
12–18 yr ceiling

🍌 SUGAR BOMB AUDIT (READ THE LABEL)

⚠️ WORST OFFENDERS

Pop-Tart pouch (28–34g) · Honey Smacks cereal (20g/cup) · Capri Sun original (13g) · Quaker Maple Brown Sugar oatmeal (12g/packet) · Frosted Flakes (12g/cup) · Honey Nut Cheerios (9g vs Plain 1g — **9x jump**)

✅ Better swaps

Plain Greek yogurt + berries + cinnamon (saves 7g)
Steel-cut oats + cinnamon + nut butter (saves 12g)
Whole orange + water vs OJ (saves 22g, +3g fiber)
Plain Cheerios + banana vs Honey Nut (saves 8g)
Eggs + whole-grain toast (0g added sugar)

🥑 SUNDAY BATCH (90 MIN, FEEDS FAMILY ALL WEEK)

📦 Containers

JBHO Overnight Oats jars 🏆
Ball Mason Jars 💰
DRKIO glass baby food jars (purée prep)

🔍 Cookware

Caraway Cookware 🏆 (non-toxic ceramic)
Lodge Cast Iron 💰 (heirloom)
Vitamix A3500 🏆 / **NutriBullet Pro 900** 💰

🗓️ WEEKLY ROTATION (STEAL THIS)

Mon · Overnight oats + berries + chia (prep Sun)

Tue

· Egg cups + whole-grain toast + avocado

Wed · Greek yogurt parfait + granola + fruit

Thu

· Smoothie pack (frozen banana + spinach + nut butter + protein)

Fri · "Kids' Choice" — they assemble their own from drawer · **Sat** · Family pancakes — kids crack eggs + whisk

👤 **DAD'S SUNDAY JOB** · 90 min meal prep Sunday afternoon = 5 frictionless mornings. Prep eggs, wash fruit, portion snacks, set out vitamins. Kids old enough? They batch with you.

⚠️ **STORAGE RULE OF 4** · Cooked rice/pasta = **1–2 days for kids** (B. cereus). Reheat to **165°F**. 2-hr counter rule. Smell test unreliable — go by time. Full table in Kitchen Safety Companion PDF.



Daily Practices · Cross-Age Reference

Movement · Mindfulness · Music · Affirmations · Journaling

DYNAMIC MOVEMENT BY AGE

- 0–6 mo** Parent-led: bicycle legs, knee-to-chest, "Open Book" chest sweeps. 1–2 min during diaper change.
- 6–12 mo** Assisted: bicycle legs, butterfly knees, hip openers, tummy → seated → assisted standing. 10 min total.
- 1–3 yr** Animal yoga: 🐱 → 🐶 → 🐸 → 🐊 → 😊 Happy Baby. 5 min, 2x through with sounds.
- 3–6 yr** Sun Salutation A simplified: Mountain → Forward Fold → Cobra → Down Dog → Mountain. 3x through (3 min).
- 6–12 yr** 10 jumping jacks → full Sun Salutation A → 30s plank → 5 deep breaths. 5 min total.
- Parent** Same as 6–12 yr OR 10-min yoga (Yoga With Adriene morning). Do alongside kids when possible.

MINDFULNESS · BREATH BY AGE

- 0–12 mo** Parent slow-breathes WITH baby in arms (regulates baby's nervous system).
- 1–3 yr** "Smell the flower 🌸 Blow the candle 🕯️" × 3. 30 sec.
- 3–6 yr** Belly breath × 3 with hand on belly. Optional Florensi cushion = ritual cue.
- 6–12 yr** 4-7-8 breath × 4 (inhale 4 → hold 7 → exhale 8) OR 1-min body scan.
- Parent** 4-7-8 × 4 or 5-min Headspace/Calm session. Best done outside in light.

MUSIC + DANCE BY AGE

- 0–12 mo** Same morning song daily (recognized in utero from pregnancy ritual). Parent hums + sways.
- 1–3 yr** Family playlist (3–4 songs) = the morning soundtrack. Dance through dressing.
- 3–6 yr** Kid picks the morning song (her ownership). Move through Sun Salutation to her song.
- 6–12 yr** Spotify "Morning Mix" they curate. 2-3 upbeat songs while packing bag/eating.
- Why** Kraus + Trainor & Hannon: morning music + rhythmic movement = phonemic + attention + prosocial gains.

AFFIRMATIONS / DECLARATIONS BY AGE

- 0–12 mo** Parent declares OVER baby: *"You are loved. You are safe. You are strong."* Tone > words.
- 1–3 yr** Parent + child repeat together: *"I am brave. I am kind. I am loved."* Hand-on-heart.
- 3–6 yr** Kid solo (mirror): *"I am strong. I am ready. I can do hard things. Today is a good day."*
- 6–12 yr** Spoken or written: *"Today I'm grateful for _____. Today I will _____. I am capable. I am loved."*
- Family** Together at the door: *"We are a team. We help each other. Today we choose kindness, courage, gratitude."*

JOURNALING ONBOARDING

- 3–4 yr** Drawing-based. "Draw what made you happy yesterday." 1 page, 2 min. Adult captions.
- 5–7 yr** Single-sentence gratitude. "I am grateful for ____." + drawing. 3 min.
- 8–12 yr** 3 gratitudes + 1 priority + 1 affirmation. 5 min. Bullet points fine.
- 12+ / parent** Five-Minute Journal format: 3 gratitudes · today great if · affirmation · PM: 3 amazing things · how I'd improve.

RESOURCES · Cosmic Kids Yoga (YouTube, 3–10) · Yoga With Adriene (parent + 10+) · Five-Minute Journal (kids 6+) · Headspace/Calm (parent) · Florensi cushion (\$50, 2yr+ → adult)

☀️ My Morning Routine

😊 **Wake Up Happy!**
Good morning sunshine! ☀️

🪟 **Curtains + Sunshine**
Open them & say "Good morning sun!" ☀️

🚽 **Potty Time**
Big kids use the potty! ✨

🛏️ **Make My Bed**
Tiny win – big day! 💪

🌬️ **Belly Breaths**
Smell the flower 🌸 Blow the candle 🕯️ x 3

🎵 **Music + Move**
Sun Salutation x 3 with my song! 🕺

❤️ **My Affirmations**
"I am strong. I am ready. Today is good."

👕 **Get Dressed**
Pick your clothes – you choose!

🪥 **Brush My Teeth**
2 minutes – I can do it!

🍲 **Breakfast Time**
Eat up – big day ahead! 💪

🚶 **Go Outside** 👤
10–15 min sunlight – even cloudy days!

🎒 **Pack My Bag** ⭐
Lunch, water, homework!

🚀 **Ready to Go!**
Today is going to be GREAT! ✨



Morning Essentials by Room · Kitchen + Bathroom

KITCHEN – INDEPENDENCE ENGINE



Sprout Kids Sous-Chef Tower

~\$240 · brand-direct

Heirloom learning tower 12mo–6yr.



JBHO Overnight Oats Jars

AFF

~\$25/4-pack

Glass + lid. Sunday batch.



SDADI Step Stool

AFF

~\$45

Budget tower. Solid alternative.



PlanetBox Rover

AFF

~\$60

Stainless bento. Heirloom durability.



iwo 6-in-1 Foldable

AFF

~\$85

Folds + chalkboard. Small spaces.



LunchBots Medium Quad

AFF

~\$33

4 compartments. Stainless.



Avanchy Stainless Suction Bowl

~\$25 · brand-direct

Heirloom-grade.



HiYZ Sandwich Sealer

AFF

~\$18

Crustless pocket sandwiches.



Bumkins Silicone Grip Dish

AFF

~\$10

Suction silicone. Value pick.



Stasher Reusable Bags

AFF

~\$30/4

Silicone. Replaces ziploc.



APLAINR Pour Pitcher

AFF

~\$15

Toddler self-pour.



Caraway Cookware

AFF

~\$395 set

Non-toxic ceramic, no PFAS.



doddl Toddler Utensils

AFF

~\$25

Pediatric-OT designed grips.



Lodge Cast Iron

AFF

USED OK

~\$30

Heirloom — gets better used.



Opinel Le Petit Chef Set

~\$35 · brand-direct

Real knife + ring + guard 5–10yr.



Vitamix A3500

AFF

~\$650

10-yr warranty. Daily smoothies.



Stokke Tripp Trapp

AFF

USED OK

~\$320

Heirloom high chair → adult chair.



BATHROOM · HAIR CARE



Philips Sonicare for Kids

AFF

~\$50

Bluetooth app 🏆.



Mielle Pomegranate & Honey

AFF

~\$12

Hair Type 4a–4c.



Oral-B Kids Electric

AFF

~\$30

Solid value 💰.



SheaMoisture Coconut Hibiscus

AFF

~\$20/3-pack

Hair Type 3a–3c.



RiseWell Kids (hydroxyapatite)

AFF

~\$15

Cake batter. Fluoride-free 🏆.



Honest Co. 2-in-1

AFF

~\$10

Hair Type 2a–2c.



Jack N' Jill Natural

AFF

~\$8

Xylitol. Budget non-toxic 💰.



Burt's Bees Baby

AFF


~\$10


Hair Type 1a–1c.

🏠 Morning Essentials by Room · Bedroom + Entryway + Parent


🛏️ BEDROOM · 👟 SHOES · 🎒 BACKPACK · 👗 CLOSET


 **Hatch Rest+** AFF
~\$90
OK-to-wake. Sleep system carryover.

 **LittleHippo Mella** AFF
~\$50
Budget OK-to-wake.


 **Clocky** AFF
~\$40
Rolls off dresser. Stubborn risers.


 **See Kai Run** AFF
~\$45
Velcro. Foot-shaped last.


 **Native Shoes** AFF
~\$35
Slip-on. Washable. Vegan.

 **homegroove Wardrobe + Mirror** AFF USED OK
~\$130
Montessori closet. Low rod.


 **Skip Hop Zoo (toddler)** AFF
~\$22
Backpack ages 2-4.


 **State Bags Kane Kids** AFF
~\$58
School-age 🏆 . B-Corp. 5-yr.

 **Wildkin Kids** AFF USED OK
~\$30
School-age 💰 .

 **PackIt Freezable** AFF
~\$30
Built-in freezer gel. 6+ hr cold.

🚪 ENTRYWAY · 🕒 ROUTINE · 🌞 PARENT SELF-CARE

 **Mighty + Bright Routines Chart** AFF
~\$75
Magnetic flip routine chart 🏆 .

 **JJPRO Magnetic Chart** AFF
~\$25
AM/PM + reward jar 💰 .

 **Time Timer MOD** AFF
~\$35
Visual timer 🏆 .


 **Pura Kiki Stainless** AFF
~\$25
Kid water bottle 🏆 .


 **Five-Minute Journal** AFF
~\$29
Parent gratitude habit.


 **OXO 9-Cup Coffee Maker** AFF
~\$200
Programmable. SCA-certified.

 **Hatch Restore 3 (parent)** AFF
~\$220
Sunrise alarm. Wakes you with light.


 **Carex Day-Light Classic Plus** AFF
~\$130
10K lux therapy 🏆 (parent SAD).

 **Verilux HappyLight Lucent** AFF
~\$70
10K lux compact 💰 .

 **Florensi Meditation Cushion** AFF
~\$50
Buckwheat. Kids 2+ → adult.

 **Manduka PRO 6mm Yoga Mat** AFF USED OK
~\$130
Lifetime mat.

 **FullWell Prenatal** AFF · **Nordic DHA**
~\$50/mo + ~\$35
Prenatal multi + DHA.

 **LMNT Electrolytes** AFF
~\$45/30
Hydration. Pregnancy-safe.



Buy It Used First

Save Money · Reduce Waste · Build Heirlooms

♥ THE PHILOSOPHY

Kids outgrow gear in months, not years. American family raising 2 kids = ~4,000 lbs of textile + plastic waste over 18 yrs. Used heirloom-grade gear costs **50–70% less** while losing <10% of function.

✔ ALWAYS SAFE USED (HARD GOODS)

Furniture & Storage: wood furniture, learning towers, weaning tables, low shelves, hangers, baskets, post-2011 cribs.

Kitchen: stainless/glass dishes, cast iron (gets BETTER used), cutting boards, mason jars, baking sheets, kid utensils.

Mobility: strollers (frame check), high chairs (Stokke 50–70% value), carriers, bath toys (post-recall check).

Toys, Books, Clothes: wood toys, books, clothing (hot wash >130°F first), dress-up.

✗ NEVER BUY USED FROM STRANGERS

Single-impact safety devices: bike/sport/ski helmets — invisible micro-fractures. Replace after ANY crash.

Recall risk: pre-2011 cribs (drop-side ban), older bumpers (banned 2022), inclined sleepers (banned 2019).

Hygiene: mattresses (any kind), single-user breast pumps (closed-system rentals OK), opened pacifiers/nipples.

Crash history unknown: car seats from strangers (OK from a trusted friend who confirms no crashes + within expiration).

🔄 SOURCE ORDER (FASTEST → MOST VETTED)

1. Buy Nothing groups (free, hyper-local) → 2. Friends/family hand-me-downs → 3. Just Between Friends consignment events → 4. Facebook Marketplace (saved alerts) → 5. Once Upon a Child → 6. Kidizen / thredUP (clothes) → 7. GoodBuy Gear / Rebelstork (verified) → 8. Brand-direct circular programs.

📦 BRAND-DIRECT CIRCULAR PROGRAMS

Lovevery Pre-Loved

Curated Montessori toys returned to brand. Up to 70% off. Launched July 2025.

Patagonia Worn Wear

Kids' outerwear + base layers. Brand-verified. Trade-in credit.

IKEA Buyback & Resell

Take back furniture for store credit. Resold in As-Is.

REI Re/Supply

Outdoor gear, kids' bikes (NOT helmets). Member-only resale.

🧼 HOW TO CLEAN USED GEAR

Wood: vinegar 1:1 water + 24-hr direct sun. Re-oil with food-safe mineral oil.

Plastic: 1:10 bleach soak 5–10 min, rinse, air dry. OR dishwasher hot cycle.

Silicone / pacifiers / teethingers: boil 5 min OR dishwasher top rack.

Fabric: hot wash >130°F + hot dryer (kills lice/scabies/dust mites).

Bath toys with squirt holes: bleach soak, then HOT-GLUE the holes shut.

👤 THE RESELL LOOP

When kids outgrow it: clean, photograph, resell on the same channel you bought from. Recover 50–70% of cost, fund the next stage, keep gear out of landfill.

📖 Parent Protocol · Companion Resources · Back Cover

☀️ Parent Morning Protocol – Model What You Teach

Wake before kids (5:30–6:00 AM). Hydrate first (16 oz water + electrolytes). 10 min sunlight outdoors before screens. Protein-forward breakfast within 60 min. 5–10 min movement. Five-Minute Journal. **The morning is won the night before** — kids' clothes/bags out, breakfast prepped, your tomorrow on paper before sleep.

✅ DO

- ✅ Open curtains by 7 AM
- ✅ Outside within 1 hr
- ✅ Hand over the routine card
- ✅ Two-choice rule
- ✅ Pre-stage night before
- ✅ Daily affirmations + movement
- ✅ Cut round foods LENGTHWISE under 4
- ✅ Cook with kids
- ✅ Sunday batch prep
- ✅ Phones charge in kitchen overnight

- ❌ **DON'T** ❌ Honey under 12 mo
- ❌ Whole grapes/nuts/popcorn under 4
- ❌ Cut round foods crosswise
- ❌ Energy drinks for ANY minor
- ❌ Caffeine under 12
- ❌ Microwave bottles
- ❌ Water on grease fire
- ❌ Used helmet, mattress, breast pump
- ❌ Phones in bedrooms
- ❌ Skip morning sunlight

📖 Companion Resources

📖 **Choking + CPR** · 2025 AHA back-blows-first + food cutoffs.

📖 **Allergen Playbook** · 9 allergens + LEAP-Trio + neffy.

🔪 **Kitchen Safety + Knives** · Permission Ladder + grease-fire.

🧠 **"The Optimized Father"** · Full research + deep dives.

🎯 THE HONEST EDGE — WHAT THIS SYSTEM DOES NOT CLAIM

- ❌ The "21-day habit" myth — real range 18–254, mean 66 (Lally 2010).
- ❌ Marshmallow test predicts destiny — effect halved (Watts 2018).
- ❌ Power posing changes hormones — only the **felt** sense replicated.
- ❌ A perfect morning fixes a chaotic evening — and stacks don't beat basics.

The point: every claim has a primary citation; caveats are flagged. That's the brand.



📖 The Full System

Guide + 3 PDFs
thedadsystem.org/morningroutine



☕ Support the Work

Free forever — fueled by coffee
buymeacoffee.com/thedadsystem

📖 Legend & How to Print

☐ = dry-erase · 👤 = Dad+child step · ⭐ = optional · 🏆 / 💰 = top pick / value · ♻️ **USED OK** = safe used · **AFF** = Amazon Associates.

Print: Chrome → Ctrl+P → Margins None · Scale 100% · Background graphics ✓ · **Laminate Pages 5, 6, 7, 11** at child's eye level.

*"The morning is won the night before.
Independence is built one tiny job at a time."*

— Darnell Dallas · "The Optimized Father"

thedadsystem.org/morningroutine · @The_Dadsystem · Pair with The Sleep System & The Potty System
Sources at thedadsystem.org/morningroutine/sources · Informational only — not medical advice. © 2026 ASAT LLC.