

### ***Why Group Routines Matter***

Group routines provide structure and predictability, which help young children feel safe and supported.

#### **When routines are consistent and engaging, they:**

- Foster a sense of belonging
- Build independence and confidence
- Support social and emotional skills
- Reduce challenging behaviors

Volunteers play an important role in helping create calm, joyful group experiences.

### ***What This Looks Like in the Playspace***

During a shift, you may see routines such as:

- Arrival and welcome
- Free play
- Transitioning to a structured activity
- Group activity (craft, storytime, music, etc.)
- Clean-up and goodbye

Volunteers can help children engage positively in these routines by using simple strategies and warm interactions.

### ***Your Role as a PAL***

You are not expected to lead the entire group or manage behavior perfectly. Your role is to:

- Support consistent routines and transitions
- Offer choices and encourage participation
- Model patience, flexibility, and positive behavior
- Create a calm, welcoming atmosphere for all children

### Sample Playspace Shift Routine:

#### 5:45 PM – PAL Arrival

- One PAL arrives early, gets the roster from staff, and creates nametags for children.
- Set up a simple table activity (craft, coloring) before children arrive.

#### 6:00 PM – Welcome the Children

- Greet parents, check children off on roster, distribute nametags & buzzers
- Greet children warmly (high five or fist-bump)
- Remind parents about pick-up time.

#### 6:15 PM – Free Play

- Put out simple materials (crayons, markers).
- Support free play with various toys and materials.
- Spread out across the room to supervise.
- Follow the child's lead and suggest activities as needed.
- Comment positively on children's play and interactions.

### Sample Playspace Shift Routine:

#### 7:00 PM – Transition to Structured Activity

- Save messier activities (paint, playdough) for this time.
- Use bubbles, chime, or music to signal transition.
- Cue children: *“First we clean up, then we’ll paint!”*

#### 7:15 PM – Structured Activity

- Set up an activity (playdough, paint). Offer simple choices.
- Participation is always optional.
- One PAL finishes clean-up while others support the activity.
- Encourage cooperation and sharing.

#### 7:45 PM – Goodbye Transition

- Use songs and bubbles to transition to clean-up.
- Give time warnings (15 minutes, then 10 minutes remaining).
- Model and praise clean-up.
- Say goodbye with positive comments and high fives.
- Invite children to share something they enjoyed.

**Group routines are opportunities for children to feel safe, included, and connected.**

*By offering consistent support, warm interactions, and flexibility, you help create a group experience where children can thrive and have fun.*

WHAT YOU CAN DO	WHY IT HELPS
Keep it simple	Clear, age-appropriate language and gestures <b>support understanding</b> .
Encourage participation	Inviting children to join songs or activities fosters engagement and a <b>sense of belonging</b> .
Provide transition warnings	Advance notice of changes <b>helps children prepare</b> and <b>reduces resistance</b> .
Model positive behavior	Demonstrating turn-taking, cooperation, and listening <b>encourages children to do the same</b> .
Be flexible and responsive	Adapting routines to individual needs <b>supports inclusion</b> and <b>reduces frustration</b> .
Foster a sense of belonging and teamwork	Warm language and affirming each child's contributions <b>build community</b> and <b>connection</b> .