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MORNING ROUTINES

# Morning Routine Card

A printable 5-step morning card for ADHD households.

## Why This Works for ADHD Mornings

ADHD brains struggle with starting, time perception, and decision-making under pressure. This routine removes decisions, uses external cues to track time, and frontloads the non-negotiables before transition energy evaporates.

## The 5-Step Routine (45 minutes total)

### Step 1: Wake & Anchor (5 minutes)

Before anything else, do one of these:

- Drink a large glass of water
- Take a cold shower
- Play a high-energy song and dance for 2 minutes
- Stand in sunlight for 3 minutes

**Why:** You're waking the nervous system. Pick the same anchor every day.

### Step 2: First Non-Negotiable (10 minutes)

Choose one and do *only* that:

- Eat breakfast
- Take medication (if applicable)
- Get dressed
- Use the toilet and brush teeth

Do the same task in the same order every single day. This removes the "what do I do first?" loop.

*"We always eat breakfast first, then get dressed. Those are the two things that happen before anything else."*

### Step 3: Second Non-Negotiable (10 minutes)

Once Step 2 is complete, do the next item on your fixed order.

**Why:** Two done tasks build momentum. You've now spent 20 minutes and achieved something visible.

### Step 4: Movement or Transition (5 minutes)

- Walk around the block
- Do 10 jumping jacks
- Stretch for 5 minutes
- Shower (if not done in Step 1)

This physically signals to your body that the "getting ready" phase is ending.

*"Time for a quick walk. When you get back, we grab the bag and leave."*

### Step 5: Gather & Go (5 minutes)

Have a launch pad—a specific spot by the door with:

- School bag or work bag
- Phone
- Keys
- Lunch box (prepared the night before)
- Coat

Place items there the night before. On the morning, just grab the bag and leave.

### If It's Not Working

**They won't get out of bed:** Set an alarm across the room. Open curtains immediately. Don't negotiate. The anchor in Step 1 is mandatory.

**They keep getting distracted in Steps 2–3:** Use a visual timer. Set it for the time block and place it where they can see it. When it goes off, move to the next step—no renegotiation.

*"The timer says 10 minutes for breakfast. When it goes off, we move to getting dressed."*

**They take too long:** Cut it further. Bare minimum is: get dressed, eat something, out the door. Everything else (teeth, hair) happens after.

**Morning tantrums:** These often mean the routine is too rigid or too rushed. Add 10 minutes to your timeline. Let them choose between two specific options (not open-ended choice) at each step.

*"Would you rather have toast or cereal?" (not "What do you want for breakfast?")*

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