

USING A DAILY ROUTINE FOR LANGUAGE PRACTICE

Young learners benefit from a structured environment. Routines help students feel connected to what they are learning. For language learners, routines also help lower the affective filter (feelings of anxiety or self-consciousness) by providing structured, familiar activities in which they can easily participate.

One of the best ways to take advantage of the benefits of structured activities for young learners is to have a daily routine. If you work with the same students all day, this can be a morning meeting where you gather students together in one area of the room each day to complete a repeated series of activities. If you have different groups of students throughout the day, you can use this structured practice as a warm-up at the beginning of each class.

The most important aspect of using classroom routines is to repeat the activity the same way each day so that students know exactly what to expect. The language used in the activities should also be highly structured, repeated the same way each time the routine is completed, and posted in the classroom for students to see. Below are some ideas for classroom materials to include in a structured daily routine for young learners. Following this, there is a sample outline of a daily routine using the materials described.

MONTHLY CALENDAR

A classroom calendar can provide a wealth of activities to include in your daily routine. It should be posted in the area where you hold your morning meeting or gather students for the class warm-up. The calendar can easily be created on a chalkboard or whiteboard by using tape to make the grid. Then, you can use chalk or a whiteboard marker to fill in information directly on the board.

Many stores that sell educational materials offer pre-made calendar kits that contain everything needed to use in your classroom, but you can easily create your own as well. If you plan to create or purchase a paper calendar, laminating it will help preserve it for many years of use. This option also enables you to use a dry erase marker to write on it. If you are unable to laminate, using heavy poster paper and card stock to create your calendar will help it last. When students interact with the materials, have them use pointers to keep the calendar clean. To make a paper calendar, here is what you will need:

- Blank calendar grid (7 x 6) on poster paper with days of the week labeled at the top (or create this on the chalkboard/whiteboard using masking tape or colored tape)
- 7 index cards, each with one day of the week written on it
- 12 index cards, each with one month of the year written on it
- Individual cards for each number 1-31 (These should be small enough to fit into the squares on the calendar grid. Index cards cut in half or other cards that are about 5cm x 5cm work well.)
- Velcro, tape, or sticky tack to secure cards to the calendar
- A set of five icons or special cards to place on significant days/holidays during the month (star-shaped cut outs work well)

WEATHER CHART

As with a calendar, you may be able to find a weekly weather chart at an educational supply store. You can also create one on the board or from paper. The chart should have a section for each day of the week your students attend school. Non-school days can be included as well if you want to incorporate them into your routine. To create a paper weather chart, here is what you will need:

- Blank weather grid with a space for each day of the week you want to include
- Cards with the word and a picture for each type of weather: sunny, cloudy, rainy, windy, snowy, etc. (Depending on where you live, you may need to add more types of weather. It is recommended that you create several cards with the same type of weather, especially if the weather in your area is consistent. You can adjust accordingly.)
- Velcro, tape, or sticky tack to secure cards to the weather chart

DAILY SCHEDULE/AGENDA

Creating a daily schedule or agenda to include in your routine works best if you have the same group of students all day long. When working with multiple groups of students, rearranging the schedule between classes can be time-consuming, especially when the content you teach differs from class to class.

The schedule will, of course, be based on how the school day unfolds. You can simply write the times on the board and then create cards with a word and picture for the different activities your students do during the school day. Examples include:

- Morning Meeting/Warm-up
- Reading
- Writing
- Science
- Math
- Learning Centers
- Recess
- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Snack
- Music
- Art

Each card should have a picture so that students can associate the image with the word and activity. The appropriate card should be placed by each chunk of time noted in the schedule. For young learners that are a bit older, you may choose to write a sentence starter next to the card that says something like, “We will learn about _____.” You can complete this based on what you will teach in the lesson.

CREATING THE DAILY ROUTINE

All of the items described thus far, and in Week 1, can be utilized to create a daily routine that provides students with an opportunity to practice language patterns, develop vocabulary, and use language skills. It is helpful to write down the language structures you want students to use and display them next to the calendar, weather chart, or poster you will incorporate. Sentence strips work nicely for this, and you can use large paper clips to secure cards to the strips to “fill in the blanks” as you go through your routine. If you do not have sentence strips, you can also cut poster paper into long strips and use them the same way.

Below is an outline of a possible daily routine for young learners. Depending on the age of your students, some activities can be adapted or eliminated if you choose.

Topic and Items Used	Teacher says/does:	Students say/do:	Extensions:
Greetings	"Good morning/afternoon, students!"	"Good morning/afternoon, teacher!"	For small classes, ask each student "How are you, ___(name of student)___?" and have them respond accordingly with "I am fine, good, tired," etc. For large classes, have students spend 30 seconds greeting a friend and asking how they are, and then ask them to reverse roles.
Alphabet (use poster/classroom alphabet, or The Alphabet Song poster from American English)	Lead students in the ABC song while pointing to letters or download The Alphabet Song for free from American English	Sing along with the teacher	Add sounds to the routine by pointing to each letter and saying "A is for apple" and then making the sound /a/ three times, "B is for ball," etc.
Numbers (use poster, hundreds chart, or free One, Two, Buckle My Shoe poster from American English)	Lead students in counting while pointing to numbers, or sing along with One, Two, Buckle My Shoe	Count/sing along with the teacher	As students progress, practice skills such as counting by twos, fives, tens, etc. Ask students to locate numbers on the poster/chart according to statements like "I am looking for a number that is one more than ___" or "I am looking for a number that is two less than ___."
Colors, shapes, or other basic vocabulary (use posters)	Lead students in naming each of the items (colors, shapes, etc.)	Read along with the teacher or repeat after the teacher	Ask students to locate the appropriate item on the poster according to your question. For example, "Where is the triangle?" or "Where is the color orange?"
Months of the year and days of the week (use posters/lists and/or the calendar)	Lead students in a song or chant to recite the names as you point on the poster/calendar	Follow along and say the names of the months and days	Teach students that a number is associated with each month (January -1, February - 2, etc.) and ask "Which month is number ___?" to help them remember the information.
Calendar (use calendar and sentence strips with sentence starters or write them on the board and fill in the blanks)	"Now it's time for the calendar." Then ask and allow students to respond: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What day is today? What day was it yesterday? What day will it be tomorrow? • What is the month? • What is the date? • What is the year? Place cards in the blanks on	Students raise their hands to answer the teacher's questions.	Teach students how to write the date in different formats (June 6, 2016, 06/06/16, 6 June 2016, etc.) as they master each one.

	sentence strips or write on the board to fill in answers.		
Weather (use weekly weather chart and a sentence starter that says “The weather today is ____.”)	Say or sing “What’s the weather like today, someone please tell us!” Call on a student to tell you the weather. Add appropriate weather card to the chart.	Students raise their hands to answer.	Add additional questions such as, “Is it cold or hot?” Teach students the seasons and ask “What season is it now?” Add a sentence that says “The season is ____.”
Daily Information (use all of the sentence starters from the activities noted thus far)	Lead students to recite the daily information, pointing to words as you say them. Use the sentence starters you have completed, saying “Today is (day of the week). Yesterday was _____. Tomorrow will be _____. The date is (month, day, year). The weather today is _____. The season is _____.”	Students repeat after the teacher. Once the routine is familiar, they should be able to follow along and say the sentences with the teacher.	As students progress, you can create a vertical list of all of the students in the class. Post it in the meeting area and slide a paperclip next to the first student’s name. They will act as the leader and lead the class through the routine. Provide the student with a pointer if you have one. Be sure that there are clear expectations about using the pointer properly. Allow them to call on classmates to answer the questions. Remind the leader that students must raise their hands to participate. At the end of the routine, slide the paperclip down to the next name on the list to designate the leader for the following day.
Schedule/Agenda for the day (use the daily schedule/agenda)	“What will we do/learn today? Point to the daily schedule and either note the activities shown in the pictures (reading, writing, etc.) or read the “We will learn about _____” statements that you have prepared.	Listen and follow along as the teacher discusses the schedule for the day.	Once students are able to lead the routine, the leader of the day can also guide students through this portion.

As the school year progresses, young learners will become so familiar with the daily routine that you should be able to designate one student per day to lead the activities. You can also adapt some of the content that you use in the routine to reflect what you are teaching at the time, such as adding a song about weather or shapes. If you do so, it is suggested that you spend a month on each song or concept so that learners fully grasp the material before you move on. Once your learners are able to lead the daily routine, you can observe and take note of any common errors or difficulties with pronunciation.

A daily routine provides young learners with a structured activity to learn basic vocabulary and concepts. The routine provides a safe, familiar environment where learners become more willing to take risks and practice new language. The free collection [Sing Out Loud Children’s Songs](https://www.americanenglish.state.gov/sing-out-loud-childrens-songs) from American English includes posters and is an excellent resource to incorporate into your daily routine to give young learners practice



with language and vocabulary. For more ideas to incorporate into your daily routine, try the article [Using Favorite Songs and Poems with Young Learners](#) from *English Teaching Forum*.