



# Routines for kids with learning barriers

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Going to school ensures high levels of structure and routine when it comes to daily activities and learning for children.

For children with barriers to learning, this structure is often left to the wayside when going on holiday, creating an environment of uncertainty and anxiety.

Warren Thompson, Head of the Learner Support Unit at Sparrows Educational Trust in Melville, Johannesburg said "Barriers to learning can be described as any factor (physical, cognitive or emotional) that stops a learner from reaching their full potential. One of the biggest challenges that these children face is emotional regulation."

Thompson explains that when on holiday, parents should encourage their children to follow structured daily routines in order to combat fluctuating emotions such as high tempers, anxiety and stress.

Below, Thompson shares his top tips and activities for parents to consider incorporating into their child's holiday routines.

## Voice your plans for the day

A lot of parents plan their daily activities ahead of time, but they don't voice them to their children.

A good starting point to the day should include having a discussion with your child on what the planned activities are for the day. This will allow them to start thinking and planning the daily activities in their minds, so that they are less nervous when they are going to each activity.

## Make a physical schedule - be specific and use illustrations

A physical schedule placed on the fridge as a constant reminder of the child's daily activities and chores is a great idea to keep them on track.

As children with barriers to learning often forget words, especially up to teenage years, pictures and physical reminders are helpful to extend memory of tasks.



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Remember to fully schedule mornings, afternoons and night time routines. Include specific details such as when each meal time is, how long they are going to take and what is on the menu. If you plan an outing to the park or a visit to the shopping centre, include those into your daily schedule too.

Parents are then able to point to each activity before it happens. This approach will drastically reduce your child's resistance, as they know what to expect and when.

### **Include steam activities and couple them with cool down sessions**

Steam activities are high intensity activities that children can do throughout the day. These activities help work off excess energy and keep the body and brain active through the holiday period. Great steam activities for children are playing sports such as soccer, tennis or swimming.

After doing fun and very active activities, try to incorporate cool down sessions into their schedule to stabilise their energy levels. Stretches and breathing exercises are good examples of activities that you can do with your child before lunch, to help them calm down and focus on the activity at hand.

### **Incorporate learning**

One of the biggest issues children with barriers to learning have, is that they effectively peak during the school term, and then their progress halts or drastically reverses when they go on holiday. This is because consistency and repetitiveness is key with children and needs to be maintained at all times.

To maintain learning progress during holiday periods, parents should try to incorporate learning activities into their children's schedule.

All it takes is 15 to 20 minutes of simple tasks such as night time reading or fun interactive maths games after lunch. These short fun learning activities can really make a difference to your child's learning abilities, so that when they go back to school they aren't restarting the learning process from scratch.

"With the right support at school and at home, children with barriers to learning can flourish socially and academically. All it takes is a little bit of planning," concluded Thompson.

For more information on Sparrow Schools Educational Trust visit [www.Sparrowschools.co.za](http://www.Sparrowschools.co.za). To keep up to date with what's taking place at Sparrow Schools, follow them on Facebook and on Twitter.