



## Avoiding the Morning Rush Hour

Getting the kids off to school and you off to work in time can be a real challenge. Take heart though, just about all working parents go through the same ordeal each day. To avoid a complete breakdown in your morning schedule, put a few plans into place and always start your morning the night before!

### Before you go to bed

Make mornings as relaxed as possible by doing everything you can the night before. Some suggestions for your 'before bed' routine include:

- ✓ Lay out the clothes for both yourself and the children. Double check clothing to make sure they don't need ironing, repair or cleaning.
- ✓ Get the kids to take their bath or shower the night before.
- ✓ Do all of the "business" stuff like permission slips for class trips, money for school lunches, etc.
- ✓ Double check that all homework is done so that you're child is not in a panic trying to complete a project over breakfast
- ✓ Pack, or get the kids to pack their backpacks or school bags
- ✓ Make all lunches and refrigerate overnight
- ✓ Place all backpacks and bags at the door. If there is a refrigerated lunch – put a note on the bag reminding you to get the lunches out of the fridge.
- ✓ Make the table for breakfast – lay out cereals, table settings etc.
- ✓ Check the weather forecast for the next day. This will help you to make sure everyone has suitable clothing ready and might pre-warn you to potential traffic jams (ie heavy rain)
- ✓ Set the alarm for half an hour before you have to get up



### Give yourself more time in the morning

Set the alarm earlier than you absolutely have to. Figure out how long it will take to get everybody up, washed, dressed and fed, then add half an hour. Use this extra half an hour so that you have time to sit quietly with a cup of coffee before waking everyone else up.

Getting ready before the kids wake up is another great strategy. You can enjoy exclusive use of the bathroom instead of battling over the mirror in the morning peak hour.

### Listen to the radio

It's a good idea to listen out for traffic reports, weather conditions or other issues that may delay your trip to school and work. You may also enjoy the upbeat conversation and music usually programmed for breakfast radio.



### Phone list

Make sure telephone numbers for school, work, doctors or support networks are easily at hand in the morning. If you do have a mini crisis at your house at 7.30am, it will be made easier by having contact details close at hand.

### Get the kids involved

Depending on the age of your children, encourage morning cooperation in one of two ways. For young children who dawdle because they do not yet have a sense of time, tell them if they get dressed quickly there will be a treat for them (maybe a healthy little muesli bar or a quick story). Older kids tend to like watching TV – make it a rule that there is no morning TV until everyone is washed, dressed and finished breakfast.

### Get out the door early

Work out how much time you need to get the kids to school and yourself to work. Once you've figured that out, plan to leave home 20 minutes before you need to. The secret here is not to ever let the kids know about your 20-minute contingency plan. Use your extra 20 minutes to stop at a cafe near work and enjoy a coffee in peace!

Another trick might be to put all of the clocks in the house forward by 10 or 15 minutes – it will help you to stick to your time frames and get everyone moving quicker.

If you've heard on the radio that there are traffic problems, make sure you leave extra early and if possible, use an alternative route.



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