

Morning Routine Checklist — Independence Builder

Help your child start the day with confidence, calm, and growing independence.

Mornings can feel overwhelming for many children with autism. A clear visual checklist provides structure, reduces anxiety, and empowers your child to complete tasks on their own. This **Independence Builder** turns the morning routine into a predictable, achievable sequence — one step at a time.

Why This Checklist Works for Autistic Children

- **Predictability** → Reduces meltdowns and resistance by showing exactly what comes next.
- **Visual Support** → Pictures or icons make it easier to understand than words alone.
- **Independence Building** → Check off each step yourself (with a marker, sticker, or Velcro piece) to see progress and feel proud.
- **Flexibility** → customize the order or add/remove steps based on your child's needs and age.

Recommended Morning Routine Steps

Here is a simple, effective 8-step checklist. You can print it as a chart, laminate it.

1. **Wake Up** – Sit up in bed and turn off the alarm (or wake gently with a soft light/sound).
2. **Go to the Bathroom** – Use the toilet and wash hands.
3. **Brush Teeth** – Wet toothbrush, apply toothpaste, brush for 2 minutes, rinse, and put it away.
4. **Wash Face / Get Clean** – Splash water on face or quick wash (add shower/bath if part of your routine).
5. **Get Dressed** – Put on underwear, clothes, socks, and shoes (lay out clothes the night before to make it easier).
6. **Make Bed** – Pull up the sheet and blanket (a simple “heavy work” task that helps with sensory regulation).
7. **Eat Breakfast** – Sit at the table and eat a healthy meal (offer 2 simple choices to give control).
8. **Pack School Bag & Ready to Go** – Put lunch, water bottle, and school items in the bag, then put shoes on (if not already done).

Bonus Calming Step (highly recommended): Add a short sensory break — deep breaths, 1 minute of stretching, or looking at your **Emotion Faces Chart** before or after breakfast.

How to Use the Independence Builder Checklist

- **Print & Laminate** — Place it on the wall or fridge at eye level.

- **Add Pictures** — Use simple cartoon images (like the Indian children style from your Emotion Faces Chart) or real photos of your child doing each task for better connection.
- **Check-Off Method** — Use dry-erase markers, stickers, or Velcro dots so your child can physically “finish” each step.
- **Start Small** — Begin with just 3–4 steps. Add more as your child masters them.
- **Praise Effort** — Say “You did it! You brushed your teeth all by yourself!” — focus on independence, not perfection.
- **Night before Prep** — Lay out clothes, pack the bag, and set the breakfast table to make mornings smoother.
- This checklist promotes self-regulation, executive functioning, and pride in independence — skills that help far beyond mornings.

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