



BRUSHING TEETH

DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD



ABOUT THIS ROUTINE:

Brushing teeth is a great opportunity to support STEM learning! Talk about STEM ideas and use STEM words as you and your child brush together.

Next time you brush teeth, tell your child you want their help thinking through all the **steps**.

"I wonder if we can remember all the steps to brush our teeth. Let's think about what we need to do **first, next, and last!**"

As you get ready to brush, ask your child what they think needs to happen **first**. Give your child wait time to respond. Talk through the steps together, like getting out the toothbrush, adding the toothpaste, brushing, rinsing, and putting everything away. Ask your child to help you put the **steps in order** and think about why the **order matters**.

Brushing teeth is a perfect example of computational thinking! Just like following a recipe, brushing teeth works best when we follow the steps in the right order. Ask your child: "What do you think would happen if we rinsed before we brushed? What if we forgot the toothpaste?"

Start simple! Begin with just **one or two steps**, like "**First** we put on the toothpaste, **then** we brush." As your child gets comfortable, work together toward **three, four, or five more detailed steps**.

STEM LEARNING AREA:

Computational Thinking: Concepts involved in programming computers and coding.

Every child is different. Do what works best for encouraging your child's independent exploration during this suggested daily routine. These are only suggested activity adaptations. Consider consulting your child's care team first.



Follow your child's lead and interests. Enthusiastically ask your child questions about what they are doing and what they like.



Answer your child's questions. If you do not know the answer, work together with your child to discover the answer.



Encourage your child to participate in the activity as much as possible. Praise your child's efforts and successes.



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ADAPTATIONS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S LEARNING?

ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENT

- Place materials within reach in a contained space for easier access
- Use stool if your child can't reach the sink

MATERIALS

- Have child's assistive technology ready and available, including augmentative & alternative communication (AAC) device
- For easier grasping, adapt the toothbrush by building up the handle or creating grip straps using household items (masking tape, pool noodles, hair band)

INTERACTIONS OR INSTRUCTION

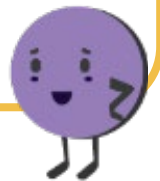
- Provide hand-over-hand support or be physically close by if needed to help your child direct items
- Narrate or sign your child's actions as they interact with the items
- Adjust the number of steps as needed.
- Use a variety of methods of communication (sign language, gestures) to meaningfully engage your child
- Use pictures or icons to signal next steps or each step of the sequence
- Communicate with your child at eye level
- Speak or sign slowly, emphasize keywords, and wait for a response
- Praise your child's efforts with words, facial expression, or body language
- Make eye contact and smile as you talk to your child
- Support children with communication challenges and/or visual impairments by using actual objects or pictures to represent steps of the routine
- Consider using visual cues or a tablet with pictures of the objects to signal next steps or each step of the sequence (see following pages)
- Use Braille on the visual cue cards to support children with visual impairment
- Model and demonstrate how to brush teeth
- Let your child know beforehand that a new activity is going to begin



Adaptations are simple changes you can make to your child's space, toys, or activities to help them stay engaged and learn STEM ideas and words during daily routines.

Need visual cues?

Visit [STEMIE's Visual Cue Library](#) or check out STEMIE's tips for creating and using visual supports with [A Guide to Visual Supports](#).



Quick Tip:

Communication may include the use of words, signs, gestures, and different types of cues, such as touch, object, movement, or visual.





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VISUAL CUES FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

USE TO DIRECT BRUSHING TEETH



Toothpaste

Add toothpaste to toothbrush



Teeth

Brush teeth up and down, side to side, and in small circles



Tongue

Scrape tongue



Water

Rinse



Eat

Repeat after each meal



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ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Mix up steps and mess up on purpose to help highlight that the steps need to go in the right order.
- Check out these books about brushing teeth:
 - *Brushing Teeth* by Mari Schuh
 - *Brush Your Teeth, Please* by Jean Pidgeon
 - *Brush, Brush, Brush!* by Alicia Padron

