



USEP-OHIO Parent Tip : Parent and Teach in Prime Time

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What is the best time of day for you or your child to approach a new project? Prime time for you may mean more quality time as you parent or teach. When should you or your child/student tackle the most tedious tasks?

Work with your natural rhythms, called "circadian cycles" to accomplish more. Knowing your uniqueness may guide expectations at home, work, and school, and help children to understand themselves.

When are you most alert? Most of us reach our peak of alertness around noon.

When are you least alert? Not surprisingly, we tend to be least alert during the early-morning hours; specifically between three and six a.m.

Early afternoon letdown: After alertness peaks, it may suddenly drop

The ideal time for simple repetitive tasks: You'll probably do your best work with your hands in mid-afternoon. Manual dexterity - the coordination, speed and precision with which you perform complicated tasks with your hands is usually superior during the afternoon hours. Tasks such as entering data, carpentry, sewing or anything else that requires skilled use of your hands will be easier at this time of day.

When are you most likely to be in a good mood? Our moods - happy or sad, calm or tense, patient or irritable - do not appear to have strong daily cycles. Our happiness quotient appears to peak during the late morning hours, but chronologists are not certain whether this is a true rhythm, or simply part of general well-being because of increased alertness.

When is your memory sharpest? Immediate, short term memory is best during the morning hours. In fact about 15% more efficient than other times of the day.

When is thinking clearest? We tend to do best on cognitive tasks - requiring the greatest mental effort - during late morning hours.

When are your senses most acute? Taste, sight, hearing, touch and smell are keenest during the late afternoon and early evening.

Knowing Yourself and others: Define Your Day

Most of us appear to follow the same general daily pattern in our level of alertness and ability to perform tasks, but the timing of these ups and downs varies from

person to person. The earlier your biological day gets going, the earlier you may enter and exit the peak times for performing tasks. The differences may be slight between a morning person and a night person - but may have circadian cycles that are at least two hours apart.

90 minute Cycles - Sometimes called Ultradian cycles - may have a significant effect on your alertness. About every 90 minutes, whether we are awake or asleep, our alertness goes up and down. Scientists have dubbed this our Basic Rest /Activity Cycle or BRAC.

The clearest 90 minute rhythm is the "sleepability" cycle - a short period, about every 90 minutes, when you are vulnerable to fatigue and sleepiness.

Bathroom Cycle: We tend to have a peak in urine flow about every 90 minutes.

The urge to eat: Keep track of hunger urges. They also reflect a 90 minute cycle.

Effects of Stress: Scientists have found that under stress, bored or short of sleep, our 90 minute cycles tend to shorten to roughly 60 minutes. That may explain why we eat, feel sleepy or fidget more when we are bored or stressed.

Ask children the following to determine if they are - a Lark (morning person) or an Owl (night person). This helps them understand their needs.

Do you wake up and go to bed early?

Do you find yourself up before the alarm goes off?

Do you wake up feeling wide-eyed and raring to go?

Do you feel like listening better and working hard doing your best early in the day?

Do you wake up and go to bed late?

Do you wake up feeling sluggish?

Do you suffer through the morning and get a surge of energy and creativity later in the day?

General observations of Morning People vs. Night People.

Morning people generally have more introverted personalities while night people are likely to be extroverted. Morning people tend to have less flexible circadian rhythms, which means they benefit both physically and mentally from following a structured routine. Morning people tend to sleep more soundly than night people and may wake up feeling more refreshed. [Images of circadian rhythm graph](#)

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