



Calming Back to School Jitters

A new school year can make children (and parents) nervous, especially if they are entering a new environment. Whether they are starting kindergarten, middle school, high school, or any new school, some children may be worried about the new setting and the new experience. Here are 10 things that parents and families can do to help their children make a successful transition!

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1. Be Prepared!

Find out ahead of time what supplies your children need — many schools have specific lists for each grade level available on their website. Take your children shopping and let them choose when options are available (colors, styles, etc.).

2. Early to Bed, Early to Rise

Start easing your children into an appropriate bed time at least a few days before school starts. Similarly, have your children get up at what will be the “normal” time during the school year. Children need time to adjust to a new schedule, and this will help them to not be quite so tired the first week of school.

3. What’s for Lunch?

Try out a few “lunch box friendly” items before school starts. If your children have a say in choosing what they take for lunch, they are more likely to actually eat it. If your children prefer to eat lunch at school, review the menu (which is often available online) to help them know what to expect. Also, find out if the school has an electronic account option for lunch money so that your children don’t have to worry about having lunch money every day.

4. Meet the Teacher

If the school has a “meet the teacher” event, plan to take your children to it. Meeting the teacher and spending a few minutes in the new classroom goes a long way in reducing first day jitters. It may also give your children an opportunity to meet a few of their classmates.

5. Talk About Expectations

Have a conversation with your children about what is expected of them at school — both academically and behaviorally. Also talk about your child’s expectations. What do they think is going to be different about being in the next grade, going to a new school, etc? What are they excited about? What are they nervous about? Talk about ways to manage these things.

6. Visit the School and the Bus Stop

This is especially important for younger children! Getting a sneak preview of where they are going will give your children a sense of security.

7. Set the Stage

Another aspect of setting up a routine is deciding where to keep things and when to do them. For example, you and your children should choose a spot for their backpacks (putting them in the same spot every afternoon will make mornings less stressful). You should also encourage good study habits by deciding on a time and distraction-free location for homework.

8. Lay Clothes Out the Night Before

Make the morning a little less chaotic by having your children decide exactly what they are going to wear the night before school starts. Also, be sure they choose something comfortable. Everyone wants to look hip, but children who are also comfortable are more confident in themselves. This is even true for children who wear school uniforms!

9. Celebrate!

The night before school starts or on the first day of school, do something fun — have a family dinner party with a special dessert, measure your children’s heights, take pictures, etc. Whatever you choose, make it an annual event!

10. Follow Up on Your Concerns

If one of your children continues to seem anxious or sad after the first few days have passed, talk about his/her feelings. You should also check in with the teacher and/or guidance counselor for suggestions on how to help.