

Back To School Basics

Simple Steps You Can Take To Make
This The Best School Year Ever



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Most children, and parents, are either extremely excited or are dreading a new school year depending on expectations. Was last year a good year? Have friendships, schools, teachers, or even physical characteristics changed?

While it is difficult to remember your own first days of school, it is easy to remember your first day at your most recent job or to think how you would feel if you had to start a new job tomorrow. The nervousness and anxiety that you go through is very similar to what it's like for your child. New faces, new expectations, new friends, it can be overwhelming.

How do you help to ease your child's anxiety?

1. Relax

Your moods directly affect your children's moods, reactions, and responses to events. This means that it is important to stay as calm and positive as you can about the upcoming change. If possible, make sure to set aside time to relax and spend time with your family.

2. Don't add any new things to your schedule

Back to school time is not the time to move, get a new puppy or undergo any major home renovations. If at all possible, wait for any new changes until after the new school year routine has been established and your children have fallen into a groove. This helps them cope with one major change at a time.

3. Reduce the surprises

One of the biggest sources of anxiety is the unknown. Who is the teacher? What do they look like? Where is my classroom? Do I have any friends in my class? The list of unknowns goes on and on. Reduce the surprises by taking advantage of back to school events. If that isn't an option, consider just taking your child to the school and walking around it a day or two before school is scheduled to begin.

4. Back-to-school party?!

Consider inviting your child's friends over to your home for a back-to-school party. This gives children the opportunity to reconnect and eliminate some of the social anxiety connected with returning to school. Additionally, it will enable them to figure some things out before they get to school. Things like where the classrooms are, who is in the class, and so on. It even allows them to commiserate about their anxieties and, thus, help each other to feel better about beginning school again.

5. Don't Dismiss

While it is important to remain calm about the beginning of school and not show your own anxieties about their success, it is also more important to not be dismissive about your child's anxieties. Your child's fears are real and legitimate. Listen to his worries and don't minimize, dismiss, or try to talk him out of them.

Easing your child's anxiety is more than listening to him and being there for him. One of the best ways to ease anxiety about beginning school is to let your child know what to expect and that starts before his first day.

Dress Rehearsal for School

One of the absolute best ways to transition into a new schedule is to be prepared. There's nothing worse than a child who is used to getting up at 9:00 am and having cereal for breakfast around noon, and then suddenly has to get up at 6:00 am, eat a full breakfast, make his lunch, and get to the bus on time. Talk about stress!

Plan ahead and practice.

Plan. A really great way to make the first day of school easy and relatively stress free is to plan ahead and practice. Decide what time your child needs to wake up, determine all of the tasks that they need to accomplish, and schedule the morning accordingly. This will help your child overcome any fears of the unknown because they know exactly what needs to be done.

Practice. The job isn't done until you practice your new schedule and make sure that it works. Rehearsing for the big day also makes sure that your child has the ability and focus to handle all of the tasks.

Ease into it. If school starts on a Monday, don't just practice on Friday. Some children need time to adapt to their new routine, and the more comfortable they are with it, the easier it will be when it counts. If possible give your child a week to ease into their new back-to-school routine.

For example, if your child needs to wake at 7:00 am and be to the bus by 8:00 am, then begin by waking them at their new time. Let them adjust to that new rise and shine time before you ask them to practice their morning tasks like eating breakfast, dressing for school, and walking to the bus

Here are some things to consider when determining your child's back to school schedule:

1. More sleep!

A good day of school requires a good night's sleep. It is imperative to your child's health and education. Consider revising your child's bedtime to compensate for their new wake-up time. One great way to ease them into a new schedule is to send them to bed earlier but allow for "quiet time" to read before bed. Gradually reduce the amount of quiet time until your child is getting the sleep that he or she needs.

2. Clothing routine.

Depending on your child's age, getting dressed in the morning can be a challenge. Little ones struggle with zippers and buttons and older children struggle with putting outfits together or simply finding clean clothes on their bedroom floor. Establishing a laundry routine to ensure that all clothes are clean when they are needed is a great way to make sure that older children not only take the responsibility of cleaning their own clothes, but also helps make sure that mornings are stress free and they go to school feeling good about themselves.

For the little ones, make sure that they can dress themselves to eliminate morning frustrations and the horrible feelings of not being able to do something. No one wants to start their day feeling like a failure, and struggling during the day to use the bathroom can cause frustrations for many.

One last consideration for all ages it to set clothes out the night before. This step alone can save valuable time each morning.

3. Take it all the way.

What else does your child need to have a successful day? Do they need to make their lunch? Do they need to pack their book bag (this is another thing that they can do the night before)? How are they getting to school? Don't forget to pre determine how long it will take to get to school and how your child is going to get there. Will you drive them? Will they walk? Take the bus? Will they go to grandma's or a friend's house before school? Whichever the choice, it should be scheduled and practiced. Running late is very stressful for all involved.

4. Don't forget a good breakfast!

Breakfast really is the most important meal of the day and, unfortunately, when we're in a rush, it's often the meal that gets forgotten. Don't allow your children to start off their day with no food to give them energy and don't fill them with sugary breakfast treats that provide them enough energy to get to school but cause their little bodies to crash right during the important learning times.

High sugar meals wreak havoc on a child's metabolism. And when sugars drop, the result of a high burning, high glycemic sugary breakfast, a child's attention span and learning ability plummets too. Additionally, high sugar meals contribute to an inability to focus and many behavioral problems. Get your child putting their best foot forward by providing them a high fiber, high protein breakfast. The traditional breakfast of non-sugared cereal, fruit, and milk is an easy and great way to start the day.

Planning is essential for a good first day. In fact, it's essential for a good school year, but what about learning? How do you make sure that your child is able to easily ease into learning? Visit [Quick And Easy Breakfast Idea's](#) for some free healthy meals suggestions for children of all ages visit

Education doesn't begin on the first day of school.

Children who have not continued using their brain during the summer often feel at a loss when school starts. Beginning at a deficit and feeling like you're struggling is not a positive way to begin a new year. Make sure that your children are actively learning all year long. This doesn't mean that they have to sit down and work math problems but they should be engaged in learning activities like reading every day, problem solving, imaginative and creative projects, and even physical activities. Summer camps, if both parents work, are a great source for stimulating minds and bodies.

Study after study has shown that parental involvement is the number-one determinant of how well all children -- regardless of their background -- do in school. Here are nine ways you can help your kids succeed in the classroom -- and beyond.

1. Create an environment in your home that encourages learning.

A positive and supportive learning environment has a direct effect on how well your children will do in school. Take the time to provide them with many different opportunities to become excited about learning. For little ones this can be as simple as providing a range of puzzles, paints, and stimulating computer programs. Older children can require more of a push but again, there are fantastic materials available including science kits, robot building clubs, book clubs, and creative writing workshops. Don't forget to make your home conducive to learning. Make sure that there are spaces available where children can sit quietly and read or do their homework.

2. Provide a well-balanced and structured life.

Structure and a home filled with love serves as a solid foundation for getting straight A's. Establish routines so your children get enough sleep, eat healthy meals, and have time for creativity and physical exercise. Not enough time in the day? Consider reducing TV and computer/video games. Your children may complain at first, but they'll thank you for it later.

3. Read to your children every day.

Reading opens up worlds of knowledge and encourages your children to explore. It also stimulates their imagination. If your child's teacher doesn't require a certain amount of reading time each day, then step in and ask your child to read from 20 minutes to one hour depending on their age. If your child isn't old enough to read, then read to them. It builds their vocabularies and strengthens the bond between the two of you. Also take a look at [Reading Solutions for Kids](#) it is a resource which aids in teaching children to read.

4. Show your children how to be organized.

Organization is difficult even for adults but organized children will find it much easier to succeed in school. Homework assignments will be completed on time, parties and school activities won't be missed, and children will feel much more in control of their lives and their education. One of the best ways to teach organizational skills is through example. Show your children how to use such organizational tools as assignment pads, calendars, notebooks, binders, and backpacks. When

children are young, it is important to guide them through an organization process that works for them and to provide “reminders” to make sure that they’re following through.

5. Teach them effective study skills.

Good study skills are absolutely essential to get A's. Make sure your children know how to read their textbooks, prepare for tests, memorize facts, and use their time efficiently. Encourage them to have a regular time for studying, and provide a study place that is free of distractions. If possible, learn and study along with your children so that they can see the importance of studying at an early age.

6. Encourage them to be an active student.

Listening in class is the easy way for children to learn. Advise your older children to take notes, which will help them concentrate on what is being said. If they don't know how to take notes, there are classes that children can take online, in person, and textbooks on the subject that you can purchase at your local bookstore. It is also important to encourage your children to participate in class. Make sure that they don't leave a class with unanswered questions and that they are confident enough to ask them. Participation increases a child's interest in what they're learning.

7. Help your children learn how to tackle homework.

Homework is part of every day school life, and though many children dread the work, doing homework reinforces what they learn in school. Provide a supportive and structured environment so that your children feel able to tackle their homework every day, and emphasize how important it is by making sure that it is completed to the best of their ability each day. Of course this will require you to be somewhat of a homework vigilante, but it is important.

8. Talk to your children about school.

Your children spend hours in school every day and a lot will happen during that time. Asking questions about their day will show them that you are genuinely interested in their day. This will also help you to be aware of any problems that your children are dealing with socially or with their schoolwork.

9. Develop a good relationship with your children's teachers.

Stay in the loop. Establishing communication with teachers and administrators will help your children do well in school and it will make it easier to address any potential problems. Attend parent-teacher

conferences, visit your kids' classrooms, and volunteer to help their teachers and go on fieldtrips when possible.

Ten Skills For Better Learners and Better Grades.

1. Set goals.

Teach your children to set goals and how to create a plan to achieve them. Regardless of your children's ability and track in school, encourage your children to set goals. For example, a student that struggled last year can set goals to achieve a certain grade in his or her hardest classes. A child that excels in school can strive to achieve all A's and become a member of a team or club. Goals don't have to be huge, the point is to teach your child to set them and then develop a plan to achieve them. It is a skill that they will benefit from for the rest of their lives. They'll gain confidence in themselves and their goals and dreams will grow.

2. Make studying a priority.

In order for your child to realize how important studying is, you can structure study/homework time into every day. Establish study time for kids, no matter their ages. Elementary-aged kids typically need 30-60 minutes per night. Middle school children need 60-90 minutes, and high school students, generally require about two hours.

Demonstrate that study hours are a priority by maintaining them despite interruptions or special circumstances and make it easy to stick to by providing a study location for each child. This can be a bedroom or a kitchen table. Choose a location that will be relatively free of distractions, and if your children study in a secluded area, don't feel badly about checking up on them to make sure they're sticking to task.

3. Be a homework detective.

Being a homework detective is a tricky job and it requires good communication between you, your child, and your child's teachers. It means knowing what is required of your child each day. This knowledge enables you to make sure that he is allowing enough time to accomplish his required tasks and that he is developing good habits and study skills and is learning what he is required to learn.

4. Don't help!

Unless they really need it. Helping your children with their homework creates dependency and takes away their responsibility. And never give in to the temptation to do their work for them because you want it to be done correctly. Your child needs to learn for himself.

5. Consider alternatives.

Some learning challenges require alternative and creative solutions. Don't dismiss a solution simply because you've never heard of it or because you're uncomfortable with it. Always look for a fresh idea and encourage your children to do so. For example, if your child struggles during math, consider what time math class is. Is the inability to focus due to an inadequate breakfast or too many snacks at lunch?

6. Put the computer and television in a central location.

Placing the television and computer in a main room means that it is less likely that your child will waste time. Both can be great tools for learning but left to our own devices, they are easy places to get sidetracked. Additionally, by placing them in a main room, it enables you to monitor the appropriateness of the program, game, or web site.

7. Read.

I know we've mentioned this a few times; it's that important! A child that reads when he or she is young will read for life and expand his knowledge, imagination, and joy for learning. Reading doesn't have to be a struggle. You can make it fun by taking turns reading with your child and making sure that your child is reading books that are appropriate for his age level.

8. Be involved.

Regardless of the age of your children, it is important to be involved in their educations. It demonstrates to them that you care, it keeps you involved in and aware of what's going on in their lives, and it keeps the education system on track.

9. **Teach kids to take risks.**

This does not mean doing things that will endanger health or safety. This means encouraging your children to step out of comfortable habits and take on new adventures. This can mean something as small as trying a new food to learning a new skill or traveling to a foreign country. Taking risks expands your child's mind and raises their self-confidence. Don't forget to make it okay to fail. Your children will be more willing to take on challenges if they have the freedom to fail as well as the opportunity to succeed.

10. **Be a good role model.**

Remember the phrase, do as I say and not as I do? Well, it doesn't work. If you want your children to develop good habits, you have to demonstrate good habits. If you want them to be healthy, eat healthy. If you want them to exercise, then you must exercise. If you want them to have good manners, then show good manners. If you want them to be good students, then demonstrate what it means to be a good student. Your children look up to you. Be something that makes them proud and shows them all that they can be, and more!

The new school year should be an exciting time for your child. By taking these simple steps to encourage learning year round, support a learning environment, and to make sure that your children have the structure that they need to make every day as good as it can be, you're sure to be giving your children the best chance at success.

Raising school age children isn't easy, but the rewards when they're successful make it all worth it. Support your children to be successful and then celebrate their successes. They're your successes too!

Additional Resources

[Helping Your Teen With High School](#) - Discover exactly how to help your teen deal with the pressures of high school and also help them to be more independent.

[101 Easy Science Projects](#) - Downloadable e-book with step by step instructions for 101 easy science projects for kids in grades K-12.

[Hooked On Phonics](#) - Visit the leading creator of educational products for families that are fun, easy to use and generate results.

[Zoobooks](#) -- Turn a youngster's love of animals into a love of reading!

[Kids Activity Calendar](#) - Weekly activities, crafts and games all about the alphabet for your preschooler.

[How To Help Your Child With Homework](#) -- The Complete Guide To Encouraging Good Study Habits And Ending The Homework Wars.