



# FAMILY

Back-to-school: kindergarten-8th no. 10.246

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## Quick Facts...

Parents can make the transition smoother for children with a little planning and preparation.

Two or three weeks before school starts, take a walk or bike ride in the school community so the child can become familiar with the route and environment.

Encourage children to take responsibility for their belongings by putting their toys in special places, and hanging, folding, and putting away clothes.

Check immunization records and make sure everything is up-to-date.

Establish basic rules regarding bedtime, chores, television, computer, video games, and telephone. It is a good idea to begin practicing these rules a week or two before school.

## Introduction

When summer ends and stores advertise their back-to-school sales, children and some parents can feel anxious and a bit afraid of what lies ahead in the new school year.

## Preparation

Young children going to school for the first time can be both excited and fearful. They have passed the preschool stage and are looking forward to going to the “big school”, but are not quite sure what to expect.

Parents can make the transition smoother for children with a little planning and preparation. Begin midsummer by talking about the excitement a new school experience will bring. Read books about going to school. It is not necessary to make *back-to-school* a daily topic, however. Start talking about clothing and school supplies. Help children of every age distinguish between needs and wants. Many communities have special programs that help provide necessities for back-to-school. Call your neighborhood school, area Social Services office, or United Way to ask about these programs.

Two or three weeks before school starts, take a walk or bike ride in the school community so the child can become familiar with the route and environment. Introduce children to the principal and teachers. Many schools plan a back-to-school or welcome day or evening where students can explore their classroom, meet the new teacher, locate the bathrooms, and ask questions. If you know other parents whose children will be going to the same school, plan a “get together” so children can make new friends or become better acquainted. Invite a teacher. Insecure feelings the first days of school may be lessened if the children recognize familiar faces.

## Learning Responsibility

Encourage children to take responsibility for their belongings by putting their toys in special places, and hanging, folding, and putting away clothes. Early practice will help children take better care of mittens, lunch boxes, and other personal items when in school. Keeping track of belongings is a skill that takes several years for some children to master. This can be frustrating for parents – especially when a child loses a brand-new, expensive mitten. Help children print and recognize their names on personal items. Help children learn to check lost-and-found boxes regularly.

## Building Self Esteem

Assist children in building self-help skills. It makes children feel good if they can zip, button, and tie with little or no help from others. Kindergartners

## Back to School Checklist

- ✓ Show children love and support.
- ✓ Shop wisely for back-to-school needs and wants.
- ✓ Reuse and recycle school supplies, clothes, and toys.
- ✓ Find special programs which provide school clothing and supplies.
- ✓ Teach and practice taking care of personal items or belongings.
- ✓ Talk about expectations and establish rules.
- ✓ Help children get organized.
- ✓ Set time and place for homework.
- ✓ Discuss involvement in extra-curricular activities that interest children.
- ✓ Get to know teachers and other school personnel.
- ✓ Support school and activities.
- ✓ Set bedtime and morning routines including time for a nutritious breakfast.
- ✓ Help children realize school is fun and important.
- ✓ Help child realize school/training is fun and important.

who can perform such tasks often volunteer to help classmates and make friends while being helpful. Teachers realize the importance of praise and often show their approval when children show initiative. Every opportunity for praise helps to build children's self-esteem.

## Health

Remember to check immunization records and make sure everything is up-to-date. If you have questions, call the local health department or school nurse. Be sure to have complete and accurate emergency information on file with the school. Most schools send home a packet of required information including intake forms to return with your child on or before the first day of school.

A good night's rest and a nutritious breakfast are essential if children are to be healthy and productive.

## Exercise Patience

Elementary and middle-school children experience a different anxiety as they move from one grade to another. There are different schedules, class changes, teachers, classmates, friends, and, at times, different schools. Each school year brings a period of adjustment. Adult patience and encouragement are needed and wanted during this time. Be a good listener.

Set aside time each day to talk about school. Back-to-school time offers excellent opportunities for parents and youngsters to talk about academic goals, extra-curricular interests, and scheduled school events. Social interaction is a natural part of development. Discuss choosing friends wisely, the influence of peer pressure, and trusting personal feelings about people. Talk with children about making good decisions and accepting responsibility for choices they make. Explore alternatives and consequences of possible choices.

## Set Rules

Establish basic rules regarding bedtime, chores, television, computer, video games, and telephone. It is a good idea to begin practicing these rules a week or two before school. Relate rules and limits to such factors as a children's ages and when they must be up in the morning. For all children, make lists of chores expected of them during the week making sure to plan to coordinate these with homework and study time. Consistency is important for children at this age.

Conflicts surrounding back-to-school demands will be avoided if planning is done ahead of time. When school begins, spend a few hours on weekends cleaning and organizing clothing and toys. During the week lay out clothes, set the table, prepare lunch if necessary, and put books and lunch money in a designated place.

Be positive about school and education.



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