

Back to School Tips

Here are some parent-tested tips to ease the transition back to school for you and your child.

Prepare your child.

- If your child is used to sleeping later in the summer, start to prepare for an earlier morning by waking your child a bit earlier each day. (This did not make me the most popular parent on the planet!)
- If possible, arrange to visit the teacher or the school a week or two before the first day. Your child can start the first day with a mental image of the setting. The teacher may be able to show your child his desk or locker or other “home base.” (Don’t do this if the room is still being re-arranged. You don’t want any first day of school surprises.)
- If this isn’t practical, you can at least visit the school building, and perhaps spend some time on the playground.
- School supplies-get them well in advance so that you child can get used to them. Keep any favorite items from last year. Even if you were rewarded as a child by all new supplies, your child may prefer the “old friend” items.
- Color code notebooks and materials (including making text book covers) for different classes. Blue equals math, red equals English, etc. Color coding will help your child identify and keep their materials together and can be integrated with a picture schedule.
- Get school clothes, uniforms, and shoes early, too. And wash them many times. Cut off the labels, if your child is used to this.
- For preteens and teens, you may want to help them select a “cool” first day outfit ahead of time. First impressions are important to peers at this age.
- Create a social story or picture schedule for school routines. Start reviewing and practicing early.

Prepare yourself.

- A calm mom and dad are better able to help a child create a smooth back to school transition.
- Get your medical information in order (Vaccinations required? Documentation from physicians? Allergies? Meds?)
- Figure out who your emergency contacts are going to be and make sure you have their current phone numbers. (Sometimes this is a little more complicated for families that have children with autism.) You may be able to get the emergency cards when you visit (see

above) and have them filled out ahead of time. This will give you a less stressful first evening, so that you can help your child with his/her homework or last minute shopping for the supplies that were not on the list.

- If your child has dietary issues, firm up how that will be managed.
- Allow more time for everything during the first week. Have activities or diversions available in case you need to wait a long time for transportation.

Summing up, do everything you can to help reduce the stress level for your family during the back to school transition.