



Help your child adjust to starting school

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Beginning school is a huge step for any child. As one kindergartner put it, "I'm a little scared and a little excited." In fact, your child will likely experience a wide range of emotions, including fear, anxiety, and anticipation. And as your child's parent, there's a lot you can do to set the stage for a successful school year.

In the weeks before school starts:

- Talk with your child about what to expect.
- Take a tour of the school, and, if possible, allow your child to meet her educators before the first day.
- Read books with your child about characters facing their first day of school.
- Take your child with you to purchase any necessary school supplies. This will help him have a sense of ownership over his belongings and may even increase his excitement for the first day.
- Allow your child to choose her own lunch box and backpack, if needed.
- Begin to prepare for any schedule changes that the school year will require, such as making sure that everyone is in bed early, making a habit of picking out clothes and packing lunches/snacks the night before, and executing a few 'dry runs' of getting ready on time.
- Encourage your child to ask questions and share his feelings about starting school.
- If you know one or two other children who will be in your child's class, consider setting up a play date or two so that when your child enters the classroom on the first day, at least a couple of faces will look familiar.

The night before school starts:

- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest.
- Invite your child to help prepare his lunch/snack for the first day.
- Allow your child to have a say in what she's going to wear.

On the first day of school:

- Get up a little earlier than usual so that you can handle any glitches without running late or creating additional stress.
- Remind your child of how proud you are of him or her.
- Resist the urge to linger after saying good-bye, which may inadvertently increase your child's anxiety.

Age-by-Age Strategies

Babies

- ✓ Read to your child often.
- ✓ Talk to your child as you go about your day. This will enhance their language development.

Toddlers/Preschoolers

- ✓ Teach your child how to introduce themselves to other children.
- ✓ Set up play dates for your child so that he or she can become comfortable playing with others and engaging in different settings.

Kindergartners

- ✓ Arrange for your child to take a guided tour before the school year begins.
- ✓ Read lots of age appropriate books with your child about what to expect on the first day of school.
- ✓ Talk with your child about how to make friends and how to introduce themselves.