

# Being Prepared For Your School Day

WebMD Feature  
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## 1. Re-Establish School Routines

Use the last few weeks of summer to get into a school-day rhythm. "Have your child practice getting up and getting dressed at the same time every morning," suggests school psychologist Kelly Vaillancourt, MA, CAS. Start eating breakfast, lunch, and snacks around the times your child will eat when school is in session.

It's also important to get your child used to leaving the house in the morning, so plan morning activities outside the house in the week or two before school. That can be a challenge for working parents, says Vaillancourt, who is the director of government relations for the National Association of School Psychologists. But when the school rush comes, hustling your child out the door will be less painful if she has broken summer habits like relaxing in her PJs after breakfast.

## 2. Nurture Independence

Once the classroom door shuts, your child will need to manage a lot of things on his own. Get him ready for independence by talking ahead of time about responsibilities he's old enough to shoulder. This might include organizing his school materials, writing down assignments, and bringing home homework, says Nicole Pfleger, school counselor at Nickajack Elementary School in Smyrna, GA.

Even if your child is young, you can instill skills that will build confidence and independence at school. Have your young child practice writing her name and tying her own shoes. "The transition to school will be easier for everyone if your child can manage basic needs without relying on an adult," Pfleger says.

## 3. Create a Launch Pad

"Parents and teachers should do whatever they can to facilitate a child being responsible," says Pfleger, who was named School Counselor of the Year by the American School Counselor Association in 2012. At home, you can designate a spot where school things like backpacks and lunch boxes always go to avoid last-minute scrambles in the morning. You might also have your child make a list of things to bring to school and post it by the front door.

## 4. Set Up a Time and Place for Homework

Head off daily battles by making homework part of your child's everyday routine. Establish a time and a place for studying at home. "Even if it's the kitchen table, it really helps if kids know that's where they sit down and do homework, and that it happens at the same time every day," says Pfleger. As much as possible, plan to make yourself available during homework time, especially with younger kids. You might be reading the paper or cooking dinner, but be around to check in on your child's progress.

## 5. After-School Plans

School gets out before most working parents get home, so it's important to figure out where your children will go, or who will be at home, in the afternoons. You might find an after-school program through the school itself, a local YMCA, or a Boys and Girls Club. If possible, try to arrange your schedule so you can be there when your child gets home during those first few days of school. It may help your child adjust to the new schedule and teachers.

## 6. Make a Sick-Day Game Plan

Working parents also know the trials and tribulations of getting a call from the school nurse when they can't get away from the office. "Most of our parents, because of the economy, are working," says Pfleger. Before school begins, line up a trusted babysitter or group of parents that can pinch hit for each other when children get sick. And make sure you know the school's policy. You may have to sign forms ahead of time listing people who have your permission to pick up your child.

## 7. Attend Orientations to Meet and Greet

Schools typically hold orientation and information sessions before the start of each academic year. These are good opportunities for you to meet the key players: your child's teachers, school counselors, the principle, and most importantly, front desk staff. "The secretaries know everything and are the first people children see when they arrive at school every day," says Vaillancourt.

## 8. Talk to the Teachers

Of course, teachers are the reason your child is there. When you talk to your child's teachers, ask about their approach to homework. Some teachers assign homework so kids can practice new skills while others focus on the accuracy of the assignments they turn in. Ask for the dates of tests and large assignments so you can help your child plan accordingly. For instance, if you know a big test is coming up on Friday morning, you will know to keep things simple on Thursday evening.

## 9. Make it a Family Affair

Together, you and your child can plan for success in school. For instance, sit down with your child to create a routine chart. Ask your child what she wants to do first when she first gets home from school: play outside or do homework? Her answers go on the chart. "The more kids have ownership in creating a routine for themselves and setting expectations, the more likely they are to follow it," says Vaillancourt.