



Ready for School

Beginning school is a big milestone in your child's (and in your) life. Your child may be excited about meeting new friends and teachers and having new experiences. But she may also feel worried about separating from you and going to a place filled with strangers. Here are some fun, low-key ideas that might help her get ready for and look forward to going to school.

- Read books about real and make-believe characters going to school. Talk about activities or routines in the story that your child is excited about doing at his new school.
- Help your child understand that the feelings she is having about going off to school—worry, excitement, sadness, and happiness—are perfectly normal. Ask your local librarian or bookseller to help you choose books that can help her talk about how she is feeling about going to school.
- “Play” school with your child. Act out common routines (saying goodbye, hanging up her coat, playing outside, lunch time, etc.) She will feel more familiar with these routines in school and feel in control of the situation.
- Take a trip to your child's school so he can become familiar with the new surroundings. Contact the school in advance and make an appointment for a visit. Visit a classroom and point out the children's work around the room. Visit the playground and spend some time playing there, both when the school is in session and when it is not.
- Practice self-help skills—act them out and make it fun! If your child is bringing a lunch to school then have a picnic on the floor. Prepare his lunch box. At the “picnic” let him practice unzipping the bag, unwrapping his sandwich, etc. Let him practice buttoning his coat. Gaining control of self-help skills will help him feel confident.
- Start your “school routine” a few weeks before school begins. This will ease your child's transition and ensure that she is well rested and ready to learn. Make a chart that shows the morning school day routine: brush teeth, eat breakfast, etc. Hang the chart where your child can see it clearly.
- Have your child talk about what he thinks school will be like. Ask questions about what he thinks will be easy and what he thinks will be hard. Respond to his concerns with care and understanding.
- Listen to your child's worries about starting school—her fears may seem minor to you, but they may feel huge to her. Help ease her concerns: tell stories of when you started school and what you worried about; tuck a family photo or note to her in her backpack; read a book about feelings; or take turns talking about times you felt sad, scared, or happy.