

8 Tips to Prepare for the First Days of School

Whether your child is a creature of habit or lives for change, starting school is a big deal!

By Scholastic Parents Staff



Going off to preschool or kindergarten is an important milestone for both you and your child. It may be her first step away from home or a transition to a new setting and friends. Even the return to a familiar program has its excitements, pleasures, and anxieties. At the 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old

stages of development, "change" can bring a multitude of feelings and thoughts. Some children accept and enjoy change more than others. But it's not unusual for even the most "experienced" child to need some extra attention during the first days and weeks of school.

Here are a few simple steps you can take along the road to a great new year!

1. **Visit the school or classroom** before the first day. Some teachers invite families to visit ahead of time. If not, take a trip to the school to see the building and the playground. You might also consider inviting the teacher to come to your house.
2. **Read good books** about starting school. Literature is a great way to prompt a discussion about going off to school — check out these 11 books to ease back-to-school jitters.
3. **Talk to your child** about his feelings about school, friends, teachers, and new activities.
4. **Practice, practice, practice!** Learning how to get ready each morning for the trip to school takes time and practice. It's helpful to practice this before the actual first day. Pretend it's a school day, and go through the steps of getting up, dressed, fed, and out the door. Try this printable chart to help your child remember all she needs to do.
5. **Rehearse self-help skills** such as dressing, undressing, and hand-washing. Your child will feel more confident when she's asked to do these things at school.
6. **Make a portable family album.** You can't stay with your child all year, but your photos can! The process of making a photo album together is a bonding and comforting project. Use a small, soft plastic album (available at most dollar stores) that can be easily washed, carried, and kissed!
7. **Ask your child what kind of snack she wants to bring.** Shop together for the ingredients and engage her in the making and packing of the snack.
8. **Go school shopping.** Back-to-school clothes and items are popular with little guys as well as big. It's not too early to start the ritual of shopping for special school outfits or a backpack. It doesn't have to be something expensive. Even a "new-to-you" item will have meaning when it is designated especially for back to school.

FEATURED BOOK



PICTURE BOOK

It's Time for Preschool!

Can't wait! School's great! All the big kids go. I grew. School's new. Many things to know. Just what will new preschoolers and their parents encounter that first day of school? This friendly, energetic, and inviting picture book is the ideal introduction to the ins and outs of preschool. The best thing about it? School=Fun!

Preschool is fun, friendly, safe, and supportive. Preschool can also be scary, mysterious, and bewildering. Esmand#233; Raji Codell, a teacher, librarian, author, and literacy advocate, has written a welcoming and irresistible introduction to the preschool experience for new preschoolers and their caregivers. There is perhaps no better way to prepare a child for school than reading her books about school. It's Time for Preschool! illustrates the preschool experience from drop-off to pick-up, and also includes special events a preschooler will encounter throughout the year, such as a fire drill and field trip. Sue Ramand#225;'s colorful and warm illustrations are just as accessible as the text!

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GRADES

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