

Back-to-School:

A Parents' Checklist

Getting ready for school can be a lot of fun as long as everything doesn't happen at the last minute! Spread out everything that needs to get done over these next few weeks of summer so that by the time school starts, you and your kids can relax and step confidently into the new school year.

One month before school starts...

- Make sure your child is properly registered for school, particularly if he or she is going to a new school.
- Ensure that your child is finishing (and finishing well) any summer homework that has been assigned.
- Schedule doctor and dental appointments. Many kids need certain immunizations before school starts. Athletes in middle and high school need an athletic check up. Find out if your school requires certain medical forms for your child's doctor to sign.
- Get any school supply checklists from your child's school. (Many schools post them on their school websites.)
- Create a budget for back-to-school shopping.
- Confirm any before and after school care that your child needs during the school year so that you don't have any surprises on the first day of school.
- Get the dates on your calendar for any back-to-school activities offered by the school. (The meet-your-teacher date, student orientation, parent orientation, and any other activities.)

Three weeks before school starts...

- Start shopping for school supplies. Make sure your child knows what the budget is.
- Get a copy of the new school year calendar. (Most school districts release them around this time.) Read through the entire calendar and highlight any dates (school conferences, parent orientation, school holidays, late-start, and early-release days). If you keep a family calendar, transfer all these dates onto your calendar.

- Visit your local library with your child. Check out books about going back to school. Some books to consider: *Little School* by Beth Norling (preschool), *I Am Too Absolutely Small for School* by Lauren Child (preschool to grade 2), *Welcome to Kindergarten* by Anne Rockwell, *First Day Jitters* by Julie Danneberg (kindergarten to grade 3, starting a new school), *High School Bound* by Martin Spethman and Chuck Klein, and the *Everything College Survival Book* by Michael Malone.
- Plan some play dates for your child before school starts. Often kids get disconnected from their school friends during the summer because they don't see them every day. Help them reconnect by inviting old school friends over to play.
- Schedule a haircut for your child if you haven't already done so.
- Help your child ease back into "learning mode" with these brain sharpening activities: <http://www.parentfurther.com/sites/default/files/brain-body-challenge.pdf>
- Decide on a quick family getaway. Visit an amusement park, a state park, or a water park, and have fun as a family.

Two weeks before school starts...

- Visit your child's school; find your child's classroom. Look for the cafeteria, the bathroom, the gym, the outdoor playground, and the front office. Anxiety goes down when kids get the chance to walk around a school before it starts. For those entering middle school or high school for the first time, have them walk through their schedule with you.
- Review the basics. Do your young kids remember their ABCs? Do your incoming fourth graders remember the multiplication table? Review them.
- Help kids clean up their rooms. Many become disasters over the summer. Now is the time to get them organized so that your child can easily find his or her clean clothes.
- Store school supplies in an easy-to-locate place. Families often stock up on extra school supplies because of the sales and then forget where they stash them.
- If you have a high school junior or senior, mark the dates for ACT and SAT exams on your calendar. Consider finding a test preparation class for your teenager.
- If you have a high school sophomore or junior, research colleges and universities. (Seniors should have their final list by now.) Find out when college fairs and college nights will be held at your school or in your community.

One week before school starts...

- Start changing your child's sleep and eating schedules to match the school's schedule. Most kids have gotten into a summer schedule where they sleep in late and eat breakfast and lunch at odd hours.
- Go to any orientations and meet-your-teacher events so that your child knows what to expect from the new school year.
- Fill out all school paperwork. Parents often get flooded with forms from the school, either before school starts or right after it does. Fill out these forms right away and get them turned in before they get lost in the shuffle of other paperwork.
- Create a route for getting to school. Even if your child rides a bus, get a copy of the bus schedule and follow it with your car. That way your child can see where the bus goes and where it stops. (Some kids get very anxious about their bus routes, particularly if they have to change buses or the bus stops at multiple schools.)
- Take your child grocery shopping. Together, find healthy foods for snacks and school lunches.
- Create a homework space. Find a place for your kids to do homework. If it's a designated space for homework (such as a desk in their room), help them set it up with supplies. If it's a shared space, create a folder, backpack, or box where they can keep track of their homework supplies.
- Set up a homework time now. Get kids in the habit of reading books during the homework time so that when school starts, they're ready to start doing homework again.
- Get excited about school starting. When kids see that you value education, they'll be more apt to value it as well.

Sources:

1. Preparing Kids for School, ParentFurther, <http://www.parentfurther.com/parenting/school-success/preparing-kids>.
2. School Success, ParentFurther, <http://www.parentfurther.com/parenting/school-success>