

Ready, Set, Back to School

Don't forget to complete these basic tasks before school starts.



You've stocked up on crayons and No. 2 pencils, but are you really ready for the new school year? Between trips to the mall and baseball practice, have you forgotten anything? Use these guidelines to make sure you've covered all the bases.

Get Organized

Visit the pediatrician.

Find out whether your child needs immunizations or a physical exam to participate in school activities. Make an appointment with a pediatrician, if necessary.

Plan transportation and child care.

Arrange a carpool and/or after-school care for your child. Even if you don't plan to carpool, gather contact information for neighbors and other parents who may be able to help when needed.

Mark school events on the calendar.

Create a master family schedule and add each person's appointments and activities. If you have children at more than one school, plan ahead to make sure a parent is available to attend each open house and family night.

Stock up on school supplies.

Besides buying the supplies on the list provided by your child's teacher, get extras of items your child is likely to misplace, such as glue sticks or scissors. Think about the items your child may need while doing homework and keep them in a central location.

Talk It Over

Review the rules.

Get a copy of the school's guidelines and go over them with your child. Make sure he understands all the rules he'll be expected to follow.

Check in regularly.

Ask your child how she feels about starting school. If she's nervous about making new friends, consider arranging a play date with classmates. Talk over any issues she's concerned about, such as bullies or cliques.

Evaluate extracurricular activities.

Talk with your child about extracurricular activities. Select fun activities that teach new skills, but avoid overscheduling your family or your child. Taking on too many activities can cause anxiety and distract children from schoolwork.

Meet Teachers and Staff

Visit the school before classes start.

Call the school to arrange a time for you and your child to meet his new teacher. Take your child on a tour of the school so he knows how to find his classrooms, his locker, and the cafeteria.

Talk with the teacher.

Find out whether the teacher prefers to communicate by phone, e-mail, or written notes. Let the teacher know about things in your child's life that may affect her performance, such as health problems, a recent move, or family changes. You might also mention your child's hobbies or special interests.

Learn about school resources.

Find out which professionals the school has on staff and what services they provide. Ask about the best way to get in touch with the principal, school counselor, or other staff members you may need to contact.

Make contact with the parent group.

The PTO or PTA will have lots of information about the school, including nuances and tips that aren't written down anywhere else.

Review the Routine

Discuss safe travel routes.

Make sure your child knows how to get to and from school safely. If your child walks or rides a bike to school, review the route with her until you're sure she knows it. If she rides a bus, remind her where the bus stops and where to get on the bus after school. No matter how your child gets to school, remind her of safety issues she is likely to face, such as how to cross the street.

Go over after-school plans.

Remind your child where he will go after school, whether it's home, to an extracurricular activity, or to an after-school program.