



Helping Your Child Settle Into the New School Year

The start of a new school year can bring a mixture of excitement, anticipation, and nerves. New teachers, new classrooms, different routines, and changing friendships can feel like a lot for children to take in.

As a parent, you may not be able to remove every worry, but you can help your child feel prepared, supported, and confident as they settle into the year ahead.

Here are some simple ways to make the transition easier.

1. Re-establish a Routine

During the summer, bedtimes and mornings often become more relaxed. Returning to a school routine can take some adjustment.

A week or two before school starts, gradually move bedtime and wake-up times closer to the school schedule. Encourage regular mealtimes and begin bringing back morning routines such as getting dressed, eating breakfast, and preparing a school bag.

A predictable routine can help children feel more secure and make those first school mornings less stressful.

2. Talk About Their Feelings

Give your child opportunities to talk about how they feel about going back to school. They might be excited about seeing friends but worried about a new teacher. They may be looking forward to learning new things while feeling nervous about homework or fitting in.

Try asking open questions such as:

- "What are you looking forward to most?"
- "Is there anything you're feeling nervous about?"
- "What do you think will be different this year?"
- "Is there anything you'd like my help with?"



Listen without immediately trying to solve every problem. Sometimes knowing that a parent understands is reassurance enough.

3. Focus on What They Can Control

Children can become overwhelmed when they think about everything that might happen during a new school year.



Help them focus on the things they can control. They can prepare their school supplies, choose their clothes, pack their lunch, practise their morning routine, and decide how they would like to approach the first day.

Small responsibilities can give children a greater sense of independence and confidence.

4. Prepare for the First Day

A little preparation can make a big difference.

The night before school starts, help your child get their clothes, shoes, backpack, lunch, and anything else they need ready. If possible, make the morning as calm and unrushed as you can.

For younger children, it can also help to talk through what the first day might look like. Knowing where they will go, who they might see, and what will happen when they arrive can make an unfamiliar situation feel more manageable.

5. Encourage Independence

A new school year is a great opportunity for children to develop new skills.

Depending on their age, encourage them to take responsibility for tasks such as packing their bag, keeping track of homework, organizing school materials, or preparing simple parts of their lunch.

Don't worry if they don't do everything perfectly. Learning to manage these responsibilities takes time, and mistakes are an important part of becoming more independent.

6. Don't Expect Everything to Go Smoothly Immediately

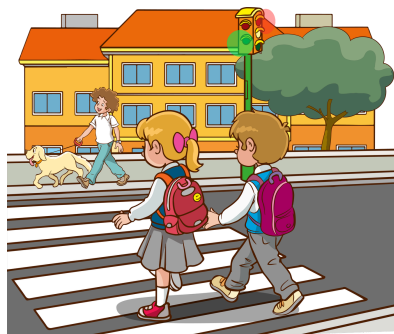
Some children settle into school within a few days. Others need several weeks.

Your child may come home tired, irritable, quiet, or emotional during the first part of the school year. This doesn't necessarily mean that something is wrong. Adjusting to a new routine can be exhausting.

Give them time to decompress after school. A snack, some quiet time, outdoor play, or simply talking about something other than school can help them recharge.

7. Keep Communication Open

Make checking in about school part of your everyday routine, but try not to make every conversation an interrogation.



Instead of repeatedly asking, "How was school?", which often produces a quick "fine," try more specific questions:

- "What was the best part of your day?"
- "What made you laugh today?"
- "Who did you spend time with?"
- "What was something new you learned?"
- "Was there anything that felt difficult?"



These questions can make it easier for children to open up naturally.

8. Stay Connected With the School

Parents and teachers are on the same team when it comes to supporting a child.

Read school communications, attend meetings where possible, and don't hesitate to reach out if you notice something concerning. If your child is struggling academically, socially, emotionally, or with the transition itself, sharing what you've noticed can help the school provide appropriate support.

9. Celebrate Effort, Not Just Achievement

A new school year isn't just about grades and accomplishments. It is also about learning how to handle challenges, make friends, ask for help, and try new things.

Praise your child's effort and persistence:

"You kept trying even though that was difficult."

"It was brave of you to introduce yourself to someone new."

"I'm proud of how you handled that."



This helps children understand that success isn't about getting everything right. It's about learning, growing, and continuing to try.

10. Be Patient With Yourself, Too

Supporting a child through a new school year can be an adjustment for parents as well.

There may be rushed mornings, forgotten homework, emotional afternoons, and days when nothing seems to go according to plan. That's normal.

Your child doesn't need a perfect parent or a perfect start to the school year. They need someone who listens, encourages them, provides reassurance, and reminds them that they don't have to figure everything out at once.





A Fresh Start

The beginning of a school year is a fresh opportunity for children to learn, grow, and discover new things. With a little preparation, plenty of patience, and an open line of communication, parents can help make the transition feel more manageable.

Most importantly, remind your child that it's okay to feel nervous, excited, uncertain, or all three at once. New beginnings take time — and they don't have to navigate them alone.

