

Parenting Together

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Back to School: Lunches, and Books, and Backpacks - Oh My!

September is a month of mixed emotions and big feelings. It is a month defined by change and our ability to 'go with the flow.' We say goodbye to the long lazy days of summer, and hello to classrooms, extracurriculars, and maybe even homework. As creatures of habit that often thrive on routine, change can be difficult for both parents and children.

We, as parents, can find comfort in knowing that to manage change, we just need to adjust our expectations (easier said than done right?).

As we plunge into the chaos of the 'back to school' season, make sure to carve out some time for your family to discuss changes ahead of time, and learn what to expect before school starts. Sometimes, just talking about the positive and negative impacts of change, can help ease any fear, anxiety, or worry that you may be experiencing. If we can be successful in reframing the back to school chaos, we may begin to see the change as opportunity: opportunity for learning, social interactions, and fun!



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"The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance."
- Alan Watts

For some parents, this is the first time you will be dropping your child off at childcare or school. As your child navigates a new environment and social setting, you will likely also have a lot on your mind (wondering if he will make a new friend, or follow her teacher's instructions). Take comfort in knowing these questions and feelings are normal. There are many parents out there that are navigating the same worries and challenges as you.

The Book Nook

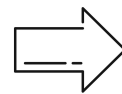
*Dora Goes to School /
Dora Va a la escuela*
Random House

*Spot Goes to School /
Spot va a la escuela*
By Eric Hill

*Franklin Goes to School /
Franklin Va a La Escuela*
By Paulette Bourgeois

Before School Starts

There are a few things that you can do to ease the transition to school for your family:



- Visit the school together
- Find the school website to share pictures of the classroom, playground, and teacher
- If taking the bus, talk about what to expect
- Create opportunities to meet and play with other kids from their class
- Adjust bedtime to an hour that works with the school schedule

As you prepare, make sure to discuss any changes to your 'after school' routine too, since children may come home exhausted or with a few activities (aka homework!) to complete.

School Ready: In the Classroom

There are many ways that you can help your child get ready for childcare or to start school.

- Read story books together
- Look at the pictures and words together and take turns turning pages
- Have back-and-forth conversations
- Play games where you practice taking turns with one another
- Talk about emotions - your own and your child's

If you are concerned about your child's progress in the classroom, schedule a time to talk to your child's teacher and learn about ways that you can help build these skills at home. Remember, as your child's first and most important teacher, you can demonstrate love, compassion, and empathy as your child navigates this important transition.

School Ready: On the Playground

When you think about 'back to school,' you may begin to picture traditional images of school buses, classrooms, desks, backpacks, and calculators. Yet, much of the learning that takes place at school happens on the playground. How your child relates to others in an unstructured social settings is just as important (if not more important) than her ability to tell you what $3 + 5$ is. Research shows that social-emotional skills are important for school success. Some of these skills include:

- Identifying emotions (for self, and others)
- Playing well with others
- Feeling good about yourself
- Following directions

For ways that you can help your child develop social-emotional skills, visit Zero to Three's resource <https://bit.ly/1s0hgl4>

Don't Overdo It!

With all of the hype surrounding 'back to school' it is easy to overthink it, and overbook it. In addition to the daily grind with school and work, many parents feel motivated to top it off with a few extracurriculars (sports, music lessons, etc.,).

These are great activities for children, but if you or your child starts to feel overwhelmed, take a step back, ask for help, and create changes that work for your family.

Remember, it is important to focus on self-care too, so that you can be the parent you want to be!



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References

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