

Back-to-School Routines for Parents

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Parents know how tough the transition can be if we allow our children to have free reign over their schedules, devices, and food all summer. The first day of school can catch us all off-guard. Those first-day school pictures will be marred by anger and tears unless we help our children bridge the gap from summer living to school schedules.

It will be a little more pleasant for everyone if you slowly wean your children from no schedule to a comfortable routine before the first day of school. They may even wake up in a good mood on that first day, ready to conquer the world of academics.

Wake Up

Many parents let their kids sleep in all summer. You need to start waking them up regularly at least a couple of weeks before school starts. If they will have to be early risers when school starts, then ease them into a routine systematically (see bedtimes, next).



Bedtimes

On the fourth week before the first day of school, set a consistent bedtime. Any time will do, but don't make it too terribly early, or the children may resist. Look at what time you used last year (if you did) and start adjusting the bedtime accordingly. For example:

- Week four: bedtime is 9:30
- Week three: bedtime is 9:15
- Week two: bedtime is 9:00
- The week before school: bedtime is 8:45
- Then, the first week of school: bedtime is back to the usual 8:30



Lunchtime

Find out when lunch is served for your children's classes, and try to make your family lunch fairly close. You don't need to serve them all at different times, like they may at school, but if you eat lunch at 11:00, and your child's school eats at 12:30, she may feel like she's starving that first week of school. Ask about snack times as well, so you can mimic those at home.

Work Area

Do you have an area set aside for homework this year? If last year's spot didn't work, then find a new one. Or create one. Some students like working at a desk, others at the kitchen table. Some can do well sitting on the floor or in their bed, but a little structure may be good for them, too. Think about the work area and its distractions. If your child is easily distracted, then he should not work on the kitchen table with the TV and radio blaring, while you're setting the table for dinner. Yet, he may not get much done if he is completely out of your sight. Start scouting work sites for each of your children now.

Organizing Paper and Packs

When your children walk through the door with piles of papers and a backpack loaded with books, where will they throw them? Do you have a place to put everything, or does it just get thrown on the floor, on the table, in the trash? Set up a family file system and clear space in the closet. Individual folders in the files and hooks in the closet can help keep things neat.

Sync Schedules

Get a copy of the school calendar and transfer it to your family calendar. You do have a family calendar, right? It's easier for most families if there is a large calendar in a central area of the house where everyone can write their schedules in. Then, you'll know when Shaina has to be at dance class, Jamie needs to be at school for orientation, Mom has to stay late at work, and Dad is gone for the week. It will be easier to plan ahead and foresee overlapping schedules.



Any family will find getting ready for school a little easier if they transition into it gradually. Children get more stressed out when they are abruptly thrown into a new schedule, and parents don't always do so well, either! Save yourself a little stress this fall as you implement a few back-to-school routines.

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