

Let's Get Ready for SCHOOL!



10 Tips and Tricks for Dealing with Back-to-School Jitters

1 Ask, Ask, Ask Away

Going back to school is a transition for all children. It's totally normal for kids to have a hard time finding the right words to talk about back-to-school feelings. Instead, they may act out, seem grumpier than usual, or get extra clingy. Asking questions about their feelings can help kids open up and share. A few to try:

- What do you think will be the best part of the school day?
- What do you think might feel hard about starting school?
- What are you excited to learn this year?
- What worries you?

Once your child starts sharing, listen and work through any worries together.

2

Give a Routine Run Down

When kids know what to expect, it can make transitions easier for everyone. Start by sitting together and mapping out what your child's school day will look like. It'll help ease worry and anxiety. You can start by giving your child the answer to questions like these:

- What time will I wake up?
- How will I get to school?
- Will I bring lunch or get it at school?
- What will I do after school?

If the school offers a meet the teacher opportunity, go! Connecting with the teacher before the first day can really help kids feel ready.



3 What's the Same? What's Different?

The beginning of the school year can mean a new classroom, grade, or school for many kids. There might be plenty of things that feel different. There will be LOTS of things that feel the same, too. Talking about both can help kids feel more comfortable. Try pairing something new with something the same. For example, "Your new classroom will be on the second floor. You'll still eat lunch in the same cafeteria, though."



Act It Out

Meeting new teachers and making friends can make even the most confident kid feel nervous. For younger children, practicing what to say to invite friends to play can help them feel ready. You can use a stuffed animal. Show your child how you would ask someone to play. Try, “Do you want to play outside together, Mr. Bear?” Invite your child to try it too. You can also help your child practice as you read together. Try, “How would you ask this character to play? What would you play?”

For older kids, ask if they feel nervous about a certain part of the day. Work together to come up with ideas for how they might work through it. Maybe they’re worried about how to join in a game during recess. Together, you can role play how they might ask to join in.



Spark Strength

Reminding your child of a time they tried something new and got through it builds their confidence. It reassures them that they can do it again! You can say something like: “I know you feel nervous about starting school this year. That’s okay. Remember when you learned how to ride your bike by yourself? You were nervous. You worked through it and figured it out! You are so strong. You can work through this too!”



Read About It

Sharing back-to-school themed books with your child can help them talk about their own feelings. They'll realize that LOTS of kids feel just like they do. The children's section at your local library can be a great resource. Here are a few titles to get you started:

- The Pigeon HAS to Go to School! by author and illustrator Mo Willems
- The Day You Begin by author Jacqueline Woodson and illustrator Rafael Lopez
- We Don't Eat Our Classmates! by author and illustrator Ryan T. Higgins
- The Name Jar by author and illustrator Yangsook Choi
- A New School Year: Six Stories in Six Voices by author Sally Derby and illustrator Mika Song



Create a Transition Time Ritual

Going from home to school can be the hardest part of the day for young children. Giving your child extra love and attention during goodbyes can make things easier. Create a short goodbye ritual that's easy to repeat. It can help comfort your child. Try something like always sharing a big hug and making a funny face before you go. A silly handshake or a certain number of kisses works too.

8 Sleep Matters

When kids are well rested, they're better able to handle worry, anxiety, or change. It's the same for adults too! Kids often stay up later and sleep later in the summer. Shifting to a school schedule a week or two before school starts can help. Your child will feel well rested. They'll be ready to take on going back to school.

9 Give It Time

Remember it's totally normal for back-to-school transitions to take time. It's also normal for kids to hit bumps in the road during the first few weeks of school. Keep checking in with your child about their day. As you listen, help them name their emotions. They'll feel loved and supported. You'll feel connected to what's going on with them.

10 Notice

Give it a few weeks. If things don't seem to be getting better or you notice any big changes in their behavior, reach out. Try calling your child's teacher to talk. Start by telling the teacher what you are seeing at home. Ask them to share what they notice at school. You can also call a school counselor directly.