



4 ways to ease back-to-school jitters



If you have children who are starting school soon, they're probably a bit nervous. Here are four tips to ease their worries.

1. Address their concerns

Don't shy away from the subject. Tell children what to expect and be sure to highlight the positives of going to school, such as making new friends. Above all, encourage them to come to you with any questions.

2. Make sure they're prepared

The school will send you a list of

supplies your child is going to need throughout the year. Avoid waiting until the last minute to purchase items. Even if you don't think your child will use them right away, it'll be easier if they have everything they need ahead of time.

3. Project calm and confidence

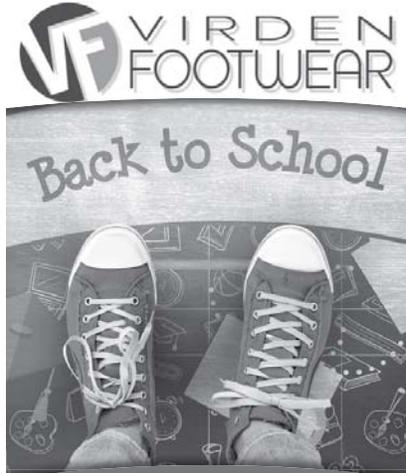
On the first day of school, it's imperative to not let your nervousness show. If you're worried, your child will likely pick up on it and start worrying too. Smile and try to remain up-

beat.

4. Don't be overprotective

Remember that your children will have to socialize with their classmates by themselves, so make sure you don't hover. That said, don't just leave as soon as their back is turned. Notify your children before you leave, but avoid drawing out the goodbyes.

When your kids get home from school, make sure to have a snack prepared and be ready to discuss their first day.



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Back to School

5 tips for making kid-approved lunches

Are you looking for ways to encourage your kids to eat healthy food at school? Here are a few tricks to make the contents of their lunchbox irresistible.

1. Create visual appeal

Choose colourful foods, and arrange them in reusable containers that have several compartments. This will help keep ingredients looking and tasting fresh. Plus, your kids will have fun creating new combinations with every bite.

2. Alternate ingredients

Keep things interesting by varying the type of bread you use for sandwiches. English muffins, pitas, bagels and tortillas are all great options. You can also mix things up with meat and plant-based proteins, and serve fruit in a variety of forms (dried, puréed, in salads, etc.).

3. Take advantage of leftovers

Did your kids really enjoy last night's dinner? To keep the excitement going and save yourself some time, simply put the leftovers in an insulated food container. Similarly, you can prepare a large batch of their favourite hot meal to use as lunches during the week.

4. Include nutritious snacks

If your children have a habit of not finishing their meal, make sure they have healthy and filling snacks on hand to give them the energy they need to get through the day. Think yogurt, trail mix or a legume pâté spread on crackers.

5. Provide protein-rich options

On days when you're pressed for time and need to opt for a ready-made meal and packaged snacks, be sure to favour ones with healthy ingredients that are high in protein and fibre.

Finally, consider getting your children involved in preparing their lunch. If they have fun putting it together, they'll likely be excited to eat it.



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3 tips for better parent-teacher communication

If you have a good relationship with your children's teachers, it can have a positive impact on your kids' academic performance. Here are three tips to help foster effective communication with your children's educators.

1. Respect their communication style

Some teachers are at ease using text messaging, social networks and email to communicate with parents. Others are more traditional and prefer to rely on phone calls and scheduled meetings to relay important information. As much as possible, respect their preference and avoid inundating them with messages. While they're invested in helping your child, they need

to manage the rest of the class too.

2. Be courteous, calm and clear

Be polite when interacting with teachers and don't undermine their authority in front of other people, especially your children. If you're angry or frustrated with the teacher, try to calm down and then explain your position clearly. It's likely that there's been a misunderstanding and that a level-headed discussion will ease the situation.

3. Attend parent-teacher meetings

Parent-teacher meetings allow you to find out how your children are doing in school. These meetings, which typically take place once or twice during the school year, are beneficial as some topics are easier to discuss face to face. Plus, attending these meetings lets your children know you're invested in their schooling.

If you follow these tips, you should be able to establish an open dialogue with your children's teachers.



How to help a child who struggles to make friends



If your child doesn't appear bothered by the situation, don't force them to make friends. But if they're lonely or feel excluded, try to help them come up with solutions.

Provide assistance and support

Sometimes kids need help bonding with other children. If this is the case with your child, bring them to the park or organize family outings that include kids in the same age group.

Additionally, participating in extracurricular activities might allow your child to build confidence and meet others who share their interests.

Above all, the most important thing to do is to communicate with them. Listen to what they have to say about their attempts to make friends. When they're ready, allow them to forge bonds with others on their own terms.

Realizing that your child is never invited to classmates' birthday parties and seems to spend their days alone at school can be upsetting. Here's what you can do to help.

Understand the cause

Try to understand why your child is isolated. Perhaps they're aggressive,

shy or arrogant. Or maybe they're being bullied. If you can't find an explanation, talk with their teachers to get more insight into the matter.

Ask your child about how they perceive their social situation and what they feel about it. They might be sad, angry or confused. However, some kids enjoy solitude.



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Kindergarten: An important step in your child's life



Is your child about to start kindergarten? It's a milestone event that stays engraved in one's memory for years to come (if not a lifetime). In fact, many adults still clearly remember their very first day of school and the mishmash of emotions that came along with this new beginning. Here are a few valuable pieces of advice to help your tiny one prepare for their big day:

- Always stay positive and enthusiastic when talking to your child about starting school, and don't forget to express how proud you are that they'll soon be among the "big kid" ranks.
- Explain how a normal school day unfolds (recess, lunchtime, after school supervision, transportation, etc.) and assure your loved one that there will always be an adult present to help.
- Encourage your child to share how they're feeling faced with this new beginning. Are they nervous? Scared? Ease their mind by letting them know that what they're feeling is completely normal and that other kids are just as anxious.

- To help your child get accustomed to their changed schedule, initiate their new routine (going to bed early, waking up, getting dressed, eating breakfast, etc.) seven to 10 days before the start of school.

- Dedicate an area of your home where your child can proudly display their drawings, crafts and other school projects.

- The evening before the start of school, help your child prepare their clothes, backpack and lunchbox for the following day.

- Most importantly, don't forget to take memorable pictures to immortalize the big day when it finally arrives!

Many schools organize fun activities for children entering kindergarten (classroom and schoolyard visits, meetings with teachers, etc.) to facilitate the transition. By participating in these activities with your child, you can help them get accustomed to their novel environment and soothe their anxieties about starting this new chapter in their life.

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Back to School

3 tips for choosing sports shoes for your child



Does your child need a new pair of sneakers for gym class? Here are three tips to help you make the right choice.

1. Check the quality of the ankle support. Sports shoes must provide ankle stability to prevent sprains, especially when doing lateral movements. Look for a multisport or basketball model.

2. Choose flexible and non-slip soles. Flexible shoes help strengthen the muscles in the feet. Additionally, grippy soles

can help prevent your child from slipping and getting injured. Make sure you observe school rules concerning non-marking soles.

3. Opt for a shoe with sufficient cushioning. Thick, cushiony shock-absorbing pads on the soles will reduce the effects of repeated impact on the heels.

If you need advice on finding the right size and shoe type for your child, talk to an associate at a local specialty shoe store.

How to encourage your child to be more independent

In order for children to develop their problem-solving skills, improve their self-esteem and ultimately be academically successful, they need to learn to be independent. Here are some ways to encourage your children to do more on their own.

- Assign your children an increasing number of responsibilities according to their age, abilities and maturity level. Avoid giving them too many new duties at once or choosing tasks for which they don't have all the necessary skills yet.

- When you assign your children a new responsibility, take the time to clearly explain how to complete the task. Supervise them the first few times, but avoid stepping in to do the job yourself. Remember to be patient,

and repeat instructions if necessary.

- If a task is particularly challenging, break it down into several steps. This will help prevent your children from getting discouraged. If they encounter a problem, guide them to a solution by asking questions rather than immediately providing an answer.

- Create a chart or calendar outlining your children's responsibilities (setting the table, helping do the groceries, brushing their teeth, etc.). If your children can't read yet, use pictures or symbols to help them keep track of their chores.

Finally, remember to highlight your child's successes, and praise them for trying even if things don't go as planned.

Is your child overscheduled?

Sports teams, dance classes, music lessons, coding clubs and more. There are countless enriching activities available to children that can add value to their lives. However, having too many obligations on top of school work can take a toll.

If your kid no longer sleeps well at night, complains of headaches or stomach aches or seems to struggle to keep up in school, they may have too many activities competing for their time and energy. Other signs they're overwhelmed include spending less time with friends and not having the opportunity to just play or relax.

So how do you strike the right balance between providing enriching activities and not overscheduling your children? Here are some options.

- Check in with them. Regularly ask if they're still enjoying their activities. Don't pressure your children into pursuing things that they don't want to do.

- Incorporate free time into their routine. Make family dinners, game night and playtime a priority. Every weekend, make sure they get some unstructured time to play, read or go outside.

- Be selective about new activities. If they express interest in starting something new, talk to them about strategies for including it in their existing schedule. It may be necessary to drop something else before committing to a new activity.

As a parent, it's your job to guard your child's well-being. This includes their mental health. If they're showing signs of being overscheduled, make some changes to their routine and give them time to simply relax and be a kid.



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Back to School

How to streamline your morning routine 5 ways to save on school supplies



With the start of a new school year on the horizon, you may be wondering how to ensure your mornings aren't spent frantically rushing around. Here are some tips to help you create a stress-free morning routine.

Start the night before

One way to save time in the morning is to complete any tasks you can the night before. Be sure to get your kids involved. They can set the table for breakfast, put their gym bag by the front door and lay out the clothes they want to wear.

Be consistent

As much as possible, do things in the same order every day. This will help make your mornings more efficient and ensure no one forgets to brush their teeth. For young children, an established routine can also help them become more independent.

Make adjustments

It's likely that you'll need to implement a few changes before you find a morning routine that works for everyone.

Give yourself time to adjust to the new school year, and don't hesitate to divide up tasks between family members.

Include some free time

Schedule 10 minutes of free time for your children in the morning. Not only will they be tempted to get ready faster so they can play, but you'll also have some time for yourself. Additionally, this serves as a good buffer if something unexpected comes up.

Happy back-to-school season!

Back-to-school comes with a lot of expenses. In this one season, you must pay for much of the supplies your child will need throughout the year. If your back-to-school budget is tight, these five tips will help you save.

1. Get organized.

You don't have to buy everything brand new. Check whether some of last year's supplies like school bags, pencils and crayons are still in good condition. Then go ahead and cross those items off your list.

2. Stagger your shopping.

You don't need to buy everything at once. You may not need some items until later in the school year. Shop for these items over time, whenever the prices are lowest. It'll take the pressure off your wallet by letting you spread the costs over several weeks or months.

3. Buy in bulk.

This solution may cost more upfront but will help you save over the long term. You can keep a reserve of stationery

on hand or share the cost among other parents.

4. Use customer loyalty cards.

If you're a regular in some stores, now's the time to turn those points you've accumulated into dollars.

5. Choose house brands.

Many stores offer products under their in-house brand of the same quality as popular name brands. This can be a good source of savings.

Visit your local retailers to stock up on discounts for back-to-school.



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