



BACK TO
SCHOOL

2013

THE RIGHT
SUPPLIES

THE RIGHT
LOOK

THE RIGHT
ROUTINE

Shopping for Supplies

Shiny folders, fresh pencils and colorful notebooks: Another school year is upon us, which means you will soon be on another trip the store to load up on supplies.

Depending on your child's age, you know that school-related items can add up in a hurry.

From art supplies to writing utensils, prices are higher than ever and won't be on the decline any time soon. But cost isn't your only hurdle in choosing the right back-to-school supplies.

You will also be dealing with the "cool factor" as your child will be focused on fitting in with what his or her peers will be sporting when school starts.

Sounds like you've got quite the task ahead.

Here are some tips to help you through it.

STICK TO THE LIST

Most teachers are kind enough to provide a list of necessary supplies well before the school year starts.

Even if that is not the case, you can assume that your child will at least need the basics to get their year started off on the right foot. By sticking to your teacher's list – and avoiding unnecessary items like glow-in-the-dark folders that can quickly distract other young students – you will be doing your teacher and your child a favor.

school, and you've got a hefty bill on your hands. Developing and staying within a budget will help your receipts from piling up even more.

You can also get your child involved in the budget-building process, which will help hone skills in money management, organization and goal-setting. Make shopping on tax-free days a part of your money-saving strategy.

Many states offer the special promotion to help families fill up on supplies without emptying their wallets.

BUDGET WISELY

The National Retail Federation estimates that families spend an average of \$95 on back-to-school supplies every year.

Multiply that by 10-plus years of

KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE

If you don't already save your school supplies from year to year, start now. Keep all pencils, folders and notebooks in a tote for storage during the summer.

When school time rolls back around, you will already have a head start on your teacher's list.

The basics like pencils and glue sticks should hold up just fine over a couple of school years, but you should expect to have to replace notebooks and folders that can fill up and break down.



A Look at Kids' Fashion

Remember when your child first started dressing him or herself? From the different-colored socks to the mismatched shirt and pants, getting dressed in the morning was just plain fun.

Flash forward to school age, and fashion is serious business. Dressing themselves now comes with the pressure of fitting in with their friends and defining their own personal style.

GIRLS' CLOTHING

Skinny jeans, flashy accessories and bright colors are already trending in girls' fashion for the 2013 school year.

Super-fitted leggings are also hot commodities, along with grungy, ripped jeans.

No matter what type of clothes you decide to buy for your child, the most important factor guiding your purchasing decision should be comfort.

Dress down your girl with a plain white T-shirt and comfortable shoes, but have dresses ready for special occasions like picture days and homecoming events.

BOYS' CLOTHING

Flannels and hoodies are on the rise in fashion for boys of all ages. Brightly colored graphic tees are complemented nicely with light jeans and a pair of comfortable sneakers.

If your boy is obsessed with classic cars, there are plenty of graphic tee options featuring hot rods and street machines that will help him feel good about the clothes he is wearing.

And you can't go wrong with khakis and polos, especially for school functions, plays and events.

SCHOOL SPIRIT

Usually available through school ordering company or even at local department stores, school-related shirts, hoodies and jackets will allow your children to convey some real school spirit.

If your child plays school sports, wearing his or her team jersey around on game day can help generate school support and excitement.

DRESS CODE

Make sure to check with your school's administration to find out if there are any clothing restrictions or dress-code requirements.

If you know the rules, then you can help your child stay out of trouble. Administrators take their jobs seriously and are often on the lookout for rule-breakers of whom they like to make examples.



Fitting into a New School

Making good grades can be hard enough for the typical student trying to get back into the swing of the school schedule.

But what about the students coming from another school, city or even state? Circumstances like a parent's job transfer or other family issues are out of children's control, but can have a major impact on their comfort level in their educational and social lives.

Being the only source of continuity after moving away, parents must work diligently to create a sense of belonging and help their child overcome anxiety, says the National Association of School Psychologists.

SUPPORT SYSTEM

If your child is anxious about school, think of ways to let them know you are thinking of them. A little support can go a long way in reminding them that they have a strong support system back at their home.

Pack funny notes in their lunch box. Send them a complimentary text message during the day.

Let your child know that feeling nervous about a new school is natural, and you are here for them to listen to any issues or concerns.

STAY CALM AND PATIENT

Anxiousness, nerves and even tears – especially early on in the school transition – may be the norm for the first days, weeks or even months of a new-school transition.

Luckily, your student's teacher is trained to help youngsters adjust to challenging situations.



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Keep open lines of communication with teachers and administrators to remain updated on your child's performance and any related issues. If school officials see that you are devoted to your child's success, they will direct special attention to collaborating with you to address any concerns.

GET INVOLVED AT SCHOOL

If your work schedule permits, consider getting involved in your child's school activities.

By periodically assisting in the classroom or on field trips, you can

help your child connect family to school life, potentially easing his or her feelings of anxiousness in new surroundings.

Most teachers will gladly accept you into their classroom, as help is always appreciated when dealing with shrinking budgets and increasing numbers of students.

Lunch Packing Tips

If you choose to go the route of packing lunches instead of opting for school offerings, part of the reason may be your desire to know exactly what your child is eating on a daily basis.

Good for you. Packing your child's lunch can be a healthier, cost-saving alternative to school lunches or open-campus trips to the local fast-food restaurants.

Now comes the hard part – finding enough options to fill the lunch bags every day over the course of the school year. Planning meals on a week-by-week basis will keep things fresh and help you stay on track.

KEEP IT HEALTHY

Filling your child's lunch bag with processed foods will ruin the overall thought behind packing lunches in the first place.

Foods high in sugar and calories can have a negative impact on a child's energy, which can ultimately harm their ability to learn within collaborative, large classroom settings.

THE PERFECT SANDWICH

With sandwich options limited only by the maker's creativity, this all-American lunch pillar is a wildly popular aspect of lunch for students everywhere. But slapping some meat in between two pieces of bread just won't cut it.

Make your child's sandwich plain, but

include separate lunch storage bags containing tomatoes, lettuce or cheese. Keeping these items separate will alleviate any soggy bread and keep your child's sandwich fresh.

FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Stuck in the chip rut? Packing too many pretzels? Opt for fresh fruits and vegetables, and your child will have a healthy snacks at lunchtime.

Apples, oranges and pineapple are fun and dip-able options that can play a big role in keeping active kids alert and focused.

You could also go with raw vegetables such as carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes and cucumber strips.

THE DRINK

Water, water and more water.

Experts say the empty calories found in many soft drinks are playing a major role in the uptick in cases related to child obesity.

Sugary juices can be just as bad, offering little nutrition.

Water and low-sugar juice are the best options to serve your children and can make the perfect complement to a well-thought-out lunch.



A New Sleep Schedule

As the summer of extended bedtimes and late-night sleepovers comes to an end, getting back into a normal sleep routine is a challenge that many families across America are facing.

This is not an issue to be taken lightly. According to the National Sleep Foundation, children with chronic sleep deprivation are more likely to have difficulties learning, paying attention and exhibit signs of attention deficit disorder.

Experts urge parents to be proactive in implementing a stringent sleep schedule before school even begins.

SET RULES

The National Sleep Foundation advises parents to integrate an incremental approach to achieving a normal sleep routine for their children.

Parents should set an earlier bedtime and wake-up time every day starting two weeks before school begins.

Once you find the optimum sleeping time, stick with it. Interrupting the schedule can make a negative impact on your child's classroom performance.

NO FOOD OR DRINK

Heavy meals and sugary drinks can be the worst enemies of a good night's sleep.

The Sleep Foundation recommends that sodas and other caffeinated drinks should be limited after noon, as to not disturb your child's natural sleep patterns. The same goes for candy, muffins and cookies.

WIND DOWN

Allowing children 10-15 minutes to wind down before bed can help them refocus and relax. This time period should include no TV, video games or electronic devices.

Instead, fill this time with reading books or talking about the next day. The key is providing a relaxing environment that will help your child wind down without multiple distractions.

Providing your child with a dark, peaceful room and comfortable bed is one of the most important actions you can take to ensure proper sleeping habits.



Make the Most of Study Time

Is your child already shuddering at mention of the word “homework?” You may be able to help.

By offering genuine support instead of overwhelming pressure, you can foster a positive learning environment at home. Students will then find it easier to transfer what they study at home into the classroom, hopefully translating to good grades and a great school year.

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY HABITS

According to www.healthy-children.org, students can actually suffer physically from bad study habits. Parents must be proactive in encouraging students to help alleviate eye, neck and brain fatigue while studying.

Snacking can also help keep your child's energy level up during those grueling homework sessions. Offer your child fresh fruits, vegetables and juice instead of less healthy options like soda, chips and candy.

DEDICATE A STUDY SPACE

Sometimes a child's bedroom is not the optimum learning space. TVs, laptops and books

can distract youngsters from the task at hand, leading to a non-productive studying experience.

Dedicate a space like the dining room or office, and watch the learning commence. Young people need an order to their work environment that helps keep them focused and on task.

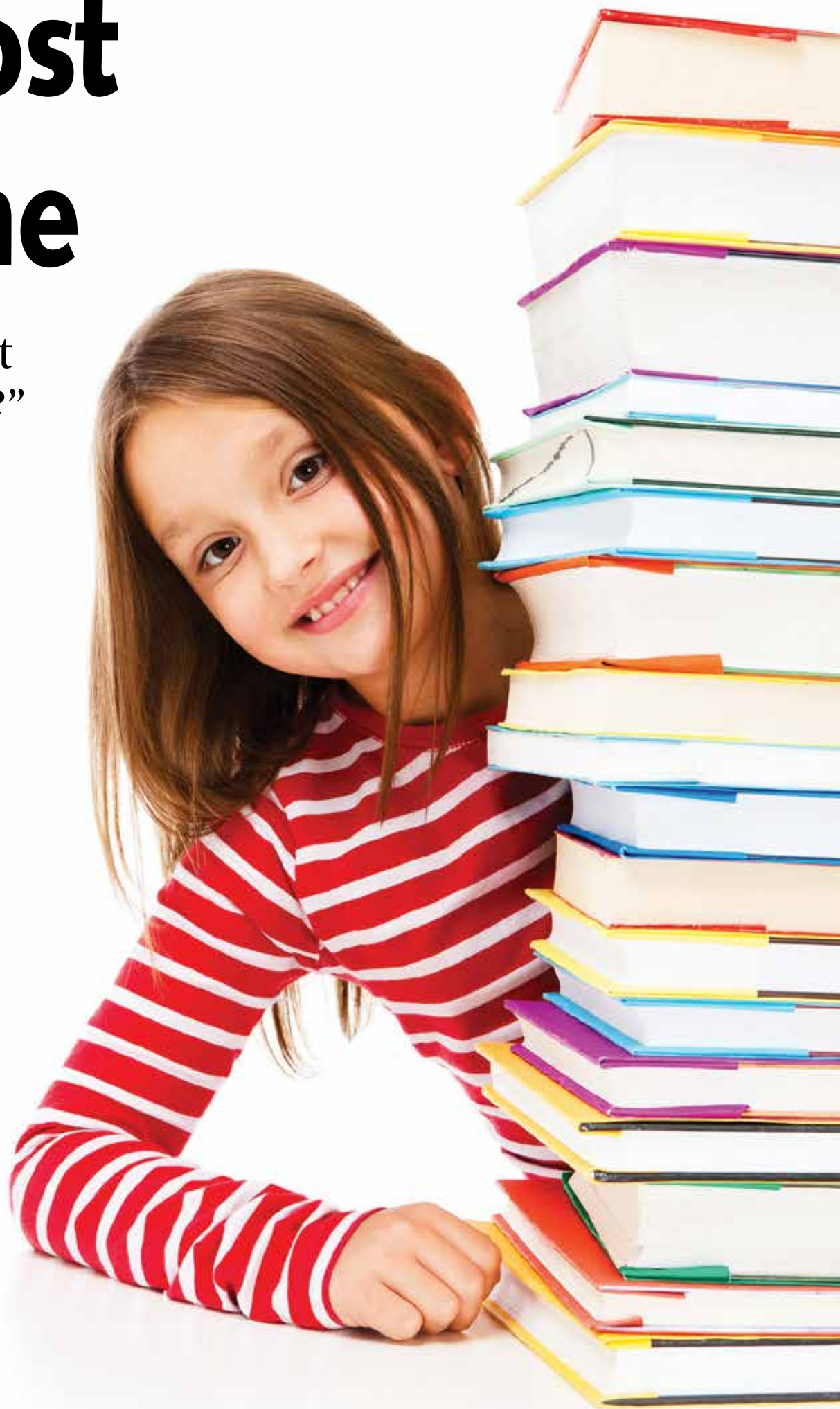
Do your part, too, by silencing the phone. Surrounding them with ringing cell phones and blaring TVs will hinder your child's comprehension of important subject matter.

TIME FOR A TUTOR?

If you continue to struggle in your effort to improve your child's study habits, you are not alone.

A tutor can be a good solution. Talk it over with your child's teacher first, and ask for referrals.

There may be in-school options that will not only save you money compared to a private tutor, but will also bring a level of comfort to the situation because they will be familiar with your child's school, teachers and curriculum standards.



The Perfect Backpack



Finding a new backpack for your child can be an overwhelming task. The options are seemingly endless, as various cartoon characters, colors and sports teams can make for a tough decision.

And while your child is weighing how to pull off the perfect look for the school year, you are probably considering price and durability.

Meet in the middle when settling on a final decision. A cordial compromise can go a long way in creating a positive experience before school even starts.

STYLE MATTERS

Maybe not to you, but style matters to your child when it comes to choosing the right backpack.

The item is functional because it is used every day, but it can also serve as a fashion accessory of sorts.

But finding a backpack that your child feels comfortable putting forward can be a challenge. Give your child a price range and let him or her see what is available at the store.

If your child finds the perfect backpack that is a bit out of the established budget, boost their chore list and corresponding allowance to make them earn the extra money needed.

BACKPACK SAFETY

Although style is important to most children, parents should be more concerned about safety. Backpacks should be designed to distribute the weight of the load among some of the body's strongest muscles.

However, backpacks that are too heavy or are worn incorrectly can cause problems for children and teenagers.

Backpacks that are not used properly may injure muscles and joints. This can lead to severe back, neck, and shoulder pain, as well as posture problems.

PACKING TIPS

The way your child packs his or her backpack can play a major factor in alleviating – or increasing – any potential health hazards

Teach your child to pack lightly, with heavier items closer to the center of the back.

HealthyChildren.org says backpacks should never weigh more than 10 to 20 percent of your child's body weight.