



Back to
SCHOOL
GUIDE

Making Back to School Fun

Parents, rejoice! Summer is over and it's time to send the kids back to school. While you may be dancing a jig, chances are your children may be a little more glum. Here are some ways to cheer them up and make going back to school easier.

ESTABLISH TRADITIONS

Start your own back-to-school traditions like a special first-day breakfast or picture to get the year started on a good foot. You can also break out balloons or other special gifts to get the kids going and ease the jitters on the first day. If you can, spend extra time helping them get ready; maybe with a new hairstyle or a new backpack to make the day fun.

TAKE A HOLIDAY

Pack the weekend before school starts with your child's favorite activities. Hit the park, the beach, go camping, anything to take their mind off the looming start of school and end the summer with a bang. Just make sure you're back home in time for them to start the year with plenty of rest.

GET ON THE GOOD FOOT

It may seem like common sense, but with summer coming to a close and everything that entails, it might be hard to remember. Make sure your kids get plenty of rest and a good, healthy breakfast before they

head out of the door on the first day of school. Have them lay their stuff out the night before so there's no last-minute scramble.

STARTING A NEW SCHOOL

If your child's starting a new school for the first time, there are going to be some extra jitters on that first day. But there are some things you can do to take the sting out. If you can, try to tour the school before the first day so she's familiar with the layout, if nothing else. Meet her new teachers and, if possible, make some connections with kids her age that go there.

Remember that while it may seem trivial to our adult problems, the first day of school is a huge event in your child's life. Keep lines of communication open and give them plenty of love during the first couple of weeks. Give them time to process their feelings and encourage them to talk to you about it. Listen to your children and take their feelings seriously, even if their missing favorite pencil pales in comparison to what you deal with every day.

While it may seem trivial to our adult problems, the first day of school is a huge event in your child's life.



Stress-Free School Shopping

Even worse than the early morning wake up of the first day of school is shopping for the first day of school. Supply lists, dress codes and crowded stores, oh my! But here's some help.

SHOP EARLY AND OFTEN

If you get your supply list for next year at the end of the school year, try picking up a little each time you run in to your local store for groceries. That way, you avoid the end-of-summer rush. You might miss some sales, but avoiding the lines may be worth it to you.

SHOP ONLINE

If you really want to go for convenience, turn to the web and have your school supplies delivered directly to your door. Bear in mind that in some cases, this may mean sacrificing selection and price. Another option many stores offer now is buying online and picking up in store. Check to see if your local retailers offer this service. If you want to save on shipping or need your items sooner than shipping can accommodate, this might be a great option for you.

LOOK FOR DEALS

Hit up the local newspaper, apps or scour websites for the best prices on back-to-school deals on supplies and uniforms alike. Compare prices and also educate yourself on price-match policies. A little research can end up saving you big bucks. Another great place to look for uniforms are second-hand stores, especially if you've got a fast-growing child.

ASK THE SCHOOL

Many schools may offer a plan to buy the school supplies through either the school or its parent-teacher organization. Ask the front office and take care of that headache really quickly. School personnel also often know the best places to look for quality uniforms and other supplies, and they can also tell you some things your student may find useful that aren't on the list. Don't be afraid to speak up and ask.



Finding Aftercare

For working parents, finding a care program for their children can be a huge worry for the back-to-school season. Here are some tips for finding the best, most enriching place for your child to spend his afternoons.

START WITH THE SCHOOL

Ask your child's teacher or the school about area after school programs, especially if transportation is a concern. The school should be able to tell you about programs that use the school's buses or that pick up there. The teacher should have some insight into which programs have the most enriching curriculums.

CHECK WITH THE STATE

Many programs have to register with and be certified by state officials. Check your with your state's department of education or whichever department certifies daycares for a list of accredited facilities in your area. Some states also provide for free a list of deficiencies found at local centers.

LOOK AT OTHER ACTIVITIES

Look at other programs or activities your child is involved in. Some may offer an after-school program, too. Check with museums, libraries, churches and community centers. Also, if your child went to a local summer camp, ask if they also provide after-school care.

VISIT

Once you've narrowed your choice down to three or four programs, take a trip and bring your child. Ask to tour



© ADOBE STOCK

the facilities and meet the caregivers that would be responsible for your child. Some questions to ask include:

- How will my child get to the center?
- What activities do you

offer?

- What are your pickup policies?
- How do you discipline children? What are the consequences for both good and bad behavior?

FINANCES

After-school care can be a costly addition to your family's budget. But there may be help in the form of tax breaks and other incentives. Check with your employer's human resources department to see if

they offer any child-care benefits like a flexible spending account. Also talk to your financial planner or tax professional about any tax breaks you may qualify for and get the paperwork ready well before you file.

Snack Ideas

A full day of learning means your child gets off the bus ready to eat everything in sight. Here are some great tips for establishing healthy eating habits and appeasing your child's ravenous appetite.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Include simple, healthy snacks in your grocery run. Baby carrots, mini peppers, celery sticks and cucumbers all make quick and easy finger foods. Also look for snack-sized cheese, applesauce, hummus, granola bars and other healthy alternatives to junk food. Keep preparation to a minimum and store them in a place that's easy for your kids to reach.

HOMEMADE GOODNESS

You don't have to be a Pinterest mom to make a week's worth of homemade goodies for your kids to snack on after school. Breakfast cookies are easily customizable and make a great after school snack, as do muffins and any quick breads. You can also whip up a week's worth of sandwich wraps or cut fruit and store it in the fridge.

FRESH AND FRUITY

Pick a peck of fresh fruit at the grocery store for your kids to nibble on in the afternoons. Kiwis, bananas, apples and oranges are all great choices. Your local grocer may even stock smaller, kid-sized fruits so there's less waste. Or, instead of a full-sized orange, try clementines. Let your kid try a new fruit or veggie every week.

DON'T FORGET THE DRINKS

One way to make sure your



kids stay hydrated is to give them their own water bottle. They can fill it with the beverage of their choice and refill it

as needed. Make sure it has a handle or a clip so they can carry it with them on any after school adventures. If they go to

an after-school program, make sure having a drink is allowed. Also keep in mind that drinks like juice pouches may be a kid

favorite, but they add extra calories to the meal. Bear that in mind when you're planning out snacks.

Homework Help

With back to school comes that dreaded avalanche of homework, the start of many a parent-child fight over the waxes. But it doesn't have to be something to dread. Here are some ways to make homework a little less painful.

FIND A GOOD TIME FOR HOMEWORK

Establish an after-school routine and fit in homework where it best suits your child. If she needs to expend a little energy before she sits quietly, let her go play before tackling her work. Some children do better after a snack, or even after bath time. Wherever to establish homework time, give your children some ownership over their routine and make sure to check their work.

FIND A GOOD PLACE FOR HOMEWORK

Give your child a quiet, well-lit place for doing their homework. This could be a desk in their room, the living room floor or the kitchen table -- anywhere they are able to concentrate and focus on learning. Avoid distractions like the television or people coming and going.

DEFINE YOUR ROLE

Show your children how their homework relates to your adult life. For instance, while they're doing math homework, sit down and pay bills or balance the check-book. If a child asks for help with their homework, follow the Department of Education's advice and make sure you provide guidance and not answers. And if the teacher asks for your involve-



© ADOBE STOCK

ment, get involved. But if they don't, stay away and let your child go, even if it means they make a mistake.

HANDLE FRUSTRATION

Keep an eye on your child for any signs of anger or frustra-

tion while he's doing his homework and be ready to help him figure out how to deal with it. You may need to let him take a short break and come back to a challenging assignment. Make sure to readily reward and encourage

good homework behaviors and positive progress.

TALK TO THE TEACHER

If you think your child is bringing home too much or not enough homework, or if you're unsure of the teacher's

homework expectations, don't be afraid to bring it up in a quick email or chat. Keeping open lines of communication with your child's teacher or teachers can go along way to soothing homework angst for the both of you.



© ADOBE STOCK

Outfitting A Dorm Room

So you're past the heady questions of after-school snacks and homework and you've got a college freshman on your hands. College — and dorm rooms — have changed quite a bit over the years and now you need to fully equip your student. Never fear, we have some tips to get you and your bank account through it.

CHECK WITH THE SCHOOL

Get a complete list of what is allowed and what isn't in the dorms and on campus. If your student is going to have a roommate and it's at all possible, get them together over the summer, at least through Skype, and work out expectations and rules for living together. Get to know their roommate's parents, too.

If possible, make a visit to campus and look at how other students have set up their rooms to maximize storage.

HIT UP SALES AND SECONDHAND STORES

Parents and students planned to spend \$5.9 billion on dorm and apartment furnishings in 2017, according to the National Retail Federation. Soften that blow with sales and secondhand stores. Many stores blast out sale after sale in the month or so before school starts. Grab some good deals on dorm essentials like microwaves, fridges and twin extra-long bed sets. Also look for creative storage solutions for small spaces, like stackable shelves. Some

schools even allow students to paint dorm rooms; a local home improvement or paint store may have discounted paint in fun colors.

LOOK FOR HAND-ME-DOWNS

Your freshman doesn't have to have a completely new minifridge. As long as Cousin Eddie's fridge doesn't have an active science experiment inside, you can score a fridge for free. Talk to family and friends to see if they have anything you can recycle for your kid's room. Or tips and tricks for squeezing

everything into that tiny space.

DON'T FORGET PERSONAL CARE

When you're hitting up the store, don't forget shower supplies, toilet paper and all those other things your student probably took for granted in their parents' house. If the dorm has communal showers, he'll probably want a caddy, a sturdy pair of shower shoes and a robe. Don't forget cleaning supplies either; even if he probably won't touch them, you'll feel better knowing they're there.

Tips for Going to College

Freshman year is a milestone for parents and students alike. Here are some tips for a successful freshman year.

GET THE RIGHT GEAR

Send your student off with all the supplies the school recommends for the first year, including the right tech. Families planned to spend a total of \$12.8 billion on electronics for their college student during back-to-school 2017, including laptops, tablets, calculators, smartphones and accessories.

Talk to your student and the university's student services office about what electronics they'll need on campus. Then visit the local tech store for good advice on what brands and models to purchase to get the most bang for your buck.

KNOW THE FREE SERVICES AVAILABLE

Many campuses have a variety of free services available to students. Parents, know what they are so you can point your student in that direction. Students, know what they are so you don't have to ask your parents. These may include medical services, counseling, financial advising, career centers and more. This is the last time many of these will be free. Go take advantage of them.

GET YOUR FINANCES IN ORDER

Speaking of financial services, college is expensive. Both students and parents should know what they're paying for and know the terms of any loans taken out. Parents, see that your children know the

basics of banking and budgeting and maybe even some more advanced banking like taking out and paying for loans and credit cards. Choose a bank for your student that also has branches in your town so that you can help out quickly in case of emergencies.

MAINTAIN GOOD HEALTH

Everyone knows about the Freshman 15 (or 20), so show your students how to eat and shop for good health. If they don't know how to cook, show them how to prep and make a few meals. Get a check up before they leave town and

help them find a doctor and a pharmacy near or on campus that accepts their insurance. And don't forget mental health. Talk to your child about stress and relieving stress, about available counseling services, and keep lines of communication open.



© ADOBE STOCK