

TIP SHEET

Making Back-to-School Easier

For kids, summer can mean playing outside until dark, staying up late, and sleeping in. After the flexibility of summer schedules, children and their parents often struggle with getting back into the school-year routine. The change in seasons and going back to school usually mean a stricter time schedule as well as a new teacher or caregiver. These changes can cause stress and anxiety for children of all ages. The following tips can help make the transition smoother for both children and adults:

Before school starts

- Talk with children about how their days will change in terms that they will understand. Children feel more comfortable if they know what to expect.
- Begin new time schedules before the first day of school. Start getting up and going to bed earlier in order to get used to new routines.
- Discuss how the school or child care program will be different from the previous year's. Talk about the new teacher or caregiver and the new classroom.
- Read a book about the first day of school and talk about the feelings of the children in the story. Encourage children to talk about their feelings and try to ease any fears.

On the first day

- Give children roles to play in routines. At bedtime, let them help to choose their clothes for the next day, pack their backpacks, or choose what toys they will take with them.
- Speak positively about the day. Sensing that you are nervous makes children more concerned. Your confidence will ease fears. Try to wait until you are back in your car before you show your own anxiety.
- Arrive early to meet the teacher and get settled in.
- Find a comfortable goodbye ritual and stick with it. Always let children know that you are leaving and when you will return.

Each day

- Keep a regular schedule. Regular schedules provide a framework and order for children's days. Children thrive on repetition.
- Take the battle out of bedtime by creating a nightly ritual. This might include picking up toys, brushing teeth, taking a bath, putting on pajamas, reading a book, and saying goodnight. Completing these tasks in the same order each night helps children to know what is expected and to build responsibility. Include children in routines by allowing them to choose a blanket or stuffed animal with which to sleep.

These tips were compiled from a variety of sources, including Child Care Aware, National Association for the Education of Young Children, and Scholastic Inc.

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