

## Preparing for "Back to School"

By Heather Grocott



This year make the start of the school year fun, exciting, and positive for you and your kids rather than the most dreaded time of the year. Sure, everybody loves to have fun in the sun, but summer is always back before you know it! So, just how can this year be different from years past of back to school, back to school...

First: Quick and easy tips for parents to begin their preparation

- **BE ORGANIZED!** Make lists, set a spending budget! Children thrive on predictable outcomes – by establishing a to do list, you not only include them in the preparation, but they will know what to expect!
- **KEEP ROUTINES!** Children should have a set bedtime routine and an established time they go to bed each night both during the school year as well as the summer. So, if bedtime routines haven't been followed during summer, start back as soon as possible! Well rested children are much more successful in school
- **CHECK THE WEB!** Many school systems have classroom web pages that teachers may list important information on regarding the start of the school year.
- **CALENDAR CENTRAL:** Once school starts, chaos has settled in. Create your family calendar NOW so that nothing is forgotten between sports activities, parties, trips, etc during the fall months.
- **PLAN MEALS:** If your family meal habits changed over the summer, begin scheduling mealtimes to mimic the school year. Be sure all members of the family have a hearty breakfast each day!
- **DO "WITH" THEM:** Get ready for back to school **with** your children, not *for* them! Ease your stress and assign your child duties in preparing for back to school.
- **DE-CLUTTER:** De-clutter the whole house in order to prepare for the school year. Create an area of the house designated just for homework (not near a TV, and not your child's bed!)
- **REMEMBER WHEN...** Back to school time should be yet another aspect of your child's development that is a memory... A moment of their life captured in time. Make it positive, make it fun, and make it a memory.

Next: Back to school shopping tips

- Allow your child to do earn some money over the summer and contribute toward his/her back to school supply needs. This is a fun and great way to teach your child the responsibility of using money to purchase items
- Develop a wardrobe necessity list and be practical. Only purchase items that are necessary (remember the socks, undergarments, etc!)
- Look for possibly hand-me-downs from older siblings and neighbors. Have a dinner party and invite all the moms and their little girls over to trade clothes – kids love it!
- Shop a little at a time. Don't go to one store expecting to do everything all at once!
- Be sure to have the supply list your child's new teacher has established, but remember; all of the items on the list are not expected to arrive on the first day of school! Ask the teacher questions about necessary supplies.
- Check the internet for great coupons and other savings.

- Purchase clothing items you know will last the entire school year – invest in some quality clothing. Also be practical – a simple cardigan and t-shirt can be worn together in the winter or separately in the spring. Think about all of the seasons!
- Be sure your child has safe, durable shoes – your child’s shoes must be able to withstand the walk to the bus stop, patrolling the corridors, outdoor play, and PE class

Third: What do classroom teachers expect during the first few days of school?

- Teachers expect children to be well rested, nourished, and ready to learn
- Most teachers recognize that children have been on “vacation” all summer
- Teachers hope for all children to be enthusiastic and positive about a fresh, new school year
- Teachers not only have expectations of children, but of **parents**, too! Be prepared to fill out all of the back to school forms you see each year. Do your child’s teacher a HUGE favor – get the forms back in a timely fashion, and use your best penmanship!!! Remember, these forms are usually used in case of emergency for your child, so be sure anyone can read them!

Lastly: How can you instill a positive attitude about back to school with your kids?

- If this is your child’s first school experience, discuss school with him/her ahead of time. Visit schools over the summer (they have great playgrounds). Also, reading books about going to school at bedtime during the summer is a great way to instill a positive attitude about school in your child.
- Include your child in the preparation
- Have your child set goals for him/herself for the upcoming year... What would you like to learn? What skills would you like to improve? Why? Record your child’s ideas and store them in a memory box. Then, revisit them a few times throughout the year. This creates a great home-school connection

Getting the kids back into the swing of “school” shouldn’t be a challenge! After all, life is too short; they only get to be school children once! Happy back to school!