



Moving On: The Big Transition

It's fun shopping for supplies and stylish new clothes for that very important first day of school. But when reality hits, and summer vacation is finally over, the whole idea of starting school can be pretty challenging and even scary. It's a huge milestone for children. New teachers, new classes, new friends, new routines — maybe even a new neighborhood and new school! The daily schedule changes from leisurely to structured. Thankfully, there are a number of things parents can do to help ease kids (and themselves) into the first days and weeks of school.



Fearful or fearless? It's normal for children to have a range of emotions as they begin a new school year. Individual temperament plays a part in whether your child will be ready to jump in to the new adventure or run back to you, hugging your knees for security.

Get ready for questions: "What will my new teacher be like?" "Will my best friend be in my new class?" "Will you take me to school?"

Questions are good, and if your child can verbalize what he's thinking about, it's great. But some kids can't, and it's helpful when parents can anticipate what's going on in their child's little head and offer support before it's formulized into doubts, fears, and questions.

Ease into new routines: Start practicing the bedtime and wake-up routines a few days ahead of time.

It will make that first day go much smoother. What clothes have been selected? What will be in that first lunch? Who will get the kids to school and at what time?



Are parents invited in for a while?

Know that little things mean a lot:

Visiting the new school or classroom before the first day is a great way to ease the jitters. There will be many things to learn, but knowing the teacher's name and where the bathroom is located are important to every child.

Talk about what to expect: Walk your kids through the first day by telling them what to expect. They will get to meet new friends, learn new things, listen to stories, play on the playground, and eat their snacks and lunch with friends. This is not the time to make it sound like a trip to Disneyland, but most children do find toys, friends, and playgrounds something to look forward to.

Establish good-bye rituals: Security begins with a good-bye and the knowledge that you will reunite at the end of the day. It's never helpful to sneak away, even if your child is engrossed in an activity. Depending on your child's age and the school policy, children may be able to bring something familiar

to school such as a stuffed animal or a picture of the family. Sharing a high five, a special handshake, and just enough hugs and kisses brings a lot of comfort.

Provide emotional security: Encourage your child to ask questions, display emotion, and share feelings with you about the new experience. Children are better equipped to adapt positively to new situations with curiosity and confidence when they have a strong foundation of security at home.

Round up a best buddy: Having at least one friend at school makes the entire experience less threatening. To reinforce a sense of stability, arrange play dates after school and on weekends.

Talk about what won't change: Even though there are many new things going on, it's important to remind children that most things won't change. The puppy will still need to be walked. Pancakes will still be served on Sunday mornings. And favorite books will still be read at bedtime.

PERSONAL PARENTING

WORDS OF WISDOM

*Love leaves the dust in search of a child's laughter.
Love smiles at the tiny fingerprints on a newly cleaned window.
Love wipes away the tears before it wipes up the spilled milk.
Love picks up the child before it picks up the toys.
Love is ever-present through the trials.
Love reprimands, reproves, and is responsive.
Love crawls with the baby, walks with the toddler, runs with the child, then stands aside to let the youth walk into adulthood.*
Author Unknown



HOW MUCH SNOOZE TIME?

Children need to be well rested to be at their best. When they get plenty of sleep, they are more mentally alert and less likely to sustain injuries from accidents. Getting enough sleep is crucial to their health.

Age

1-2 years	13-14 hours
3-5 years	11-12 hours
6-8 years	10-11 hours



SINGING WITH BABY

Babies just weeks old respond to the soothing sounds of lullabies. As they grow, hearing their own name in songs is delightful. Long rhyming lyrics, such as "Hush little baby, don't say a word/Papa's gonna buy you a mockingbird," stretch your toddler's early learning powers to organize, sequence, and remember. It's never too early to sing to your child.

VOCABULARY BUILDING

Children soak up words like a sponge. Parents have a daily opportunity to use words children haven't heard before.

TALK ABOUT TEXTURES

Is your sweater too scratchy?
Teddy bear is soft and cuddly.

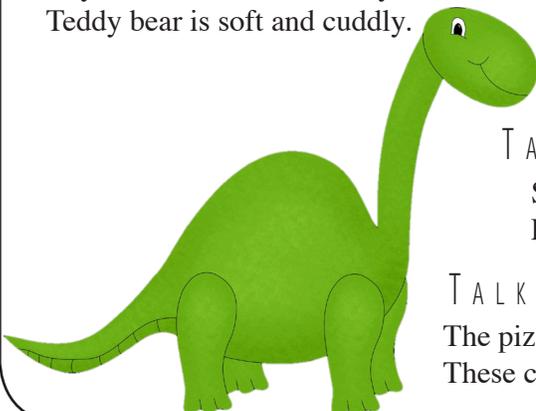


TALK ABOUT SIZES

Some dinosaurs were gigantic.
Look at this tiny ladybug.

TALK ABOUT SMELLS

The pizza smells delicious.
These cookies smell sweet and yummy.



BEAN & CORN SALSA

This recipe is so easy and so healthy!

Ingredients

- ½ cup cooked corn kernels, chilled
- ½ cup black beans, chilled
- 1 Tbsp. Italian dressing

Mix all of the ingredients together in a small bowl.
Serve with pita chips or crackers.



Language Learning

Give your child a language boost with these fun activities. They build vocabulary and reinforce storytelling skills, memory, and sequencing. They turn the wheels of creative thinking, and most of all they're a fun way to spend time together.



Lots of Lists

Making lists is meaningful to children. They see that the words on the paper are important.

If they are pre-writers, write down verbatim

what they say in answer to your questions:

What should we pack for our camping trip?

Who do you want to come to your birthday party?

What should we get at the grocery store for our picnic?



Story Starters

Make up a few story prompts and let your child fill in the blanks. This is an excellent literacy activity when you're driving in the car or waiting in the doctor's office.

- * Once there was a giant ant who made friends with an elephant and ...
- * Maggie's new friend had a tiger for a pet who ...
- * Jason wanted to learn magic tricks so he ...



Keep In Touch With Notes

- Write notes to your child, and place them in a lunch pail, under the bed pillow, on a bulletin board, or on the refrigerator. The notes can be simple, such as "I love you," or offer thanks, such as "Thank you for taking the dog for a walk."

I love you.

Create a Card

Cards for special occasions or for when something goes wrong are welcome. Provide your child with plenty of card stock, crayons, and markers. Decide on an occasion. Is the card for helping someone get well? Is it for a birthday? Maybe it's a thank-you note to Grandma for taking you to the zoo.

Whatever the occasion, help your child with the wording and suggest that he make the artwork extra special. Let him read the card over to you before placing it in an envelope and sending it on its way.



Write and Illustrate a Book

For the ultimate creative challenge, encourage your child to write and illustrate a book. Staple a few sheets of paper together and bind with duct tape. To help your child get started, search for an interesting picture and use it as a writing prompt. He can write about a family adventure or write a sequel to a well-known story, such as "The Three Little Pigs" or "Goldilocks and the Three Bears."

Search and Find

Arm your child with a felt marker, and let her search for certain words in a newspaper, on a cereal box, or in an old magazine. Read over the text and select a few words — not too many at a time.