

Back to school: A 4-week plan to start the year right

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1 (the week before school starts)						
Pick up any supplies your child will need to start out with.	Write an introduction letter or email that helps the teacher know your child. Describe strengths and challenges, plus strategies that have worked in the past.	Make sure you have all the health forms the school needs for your child.	For younger kids, start adjusting eating and sleeping schedules to school-year hours. Encourage teens to do the same.	Have a casual talk with your child about the start of school. Keep it light, and let your child lead the conversation.	See if the school will give you a class list. Knowing who'll be in the room can help your child be prepared socially.	Do something fun and relaxing with your child.
Week 2 (school starts)						
Get an outfit ready that your child feels good about. Organize and pack up supplies to avoid last-minute scrambling.	Send your child off with a confidence boost: "You've done a great job getting ready to start the year. I can't wait to hear about your day."	Rehearse things your child can say when other kids or teachers ask how summer break was.	If your child will be switching classrooms, take some of the stress off. Assure your child that most teachers will understand being a couple minutes late for a few days.	Take a breather and just let your child get used to things.	Find a small way to celebrate the first week — something like a favorite food for dinner or dessert, or an extra hour of TV.	Organize your family's school-year schedule by creating a shared calendar. Start using it now so it's familiar to everyone.

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Week 3						
When and where will your child do homework? Work together to create a calm space with school supplies handy.	If your child needs extra help or has a formal plan for support, find time to connect with the teacher about it.	Role-play different social situations your child might run into, like asking to join a game at recess.	Find a quiet time to talk with your child about how things are going. Ask specific questions, like “What’s the most fun thing you’ve done so far?”	Create systems to help your child stay organized. For example, try color-coding binders and folders.	Encourage your child to start thinking about school clubs or afterschool activities to try.	Take some time to just relax and enjoy each other’s company.
Week 4						
How can you make your morning routine easier? Think about what would make getting ready simpler for everyone.	Talk about where your child can go for emotional support at school. This can help ease anxious feelings.	Organize a three-ring binder for your child’s school records. Make room for new forms and paperwork from teachers or others who work with your child.	Role-play more social situations your child might run into, like asking a few kids to sit together at lunch.	Plan something fun (and not school-related) to do together this weekend.	Go over the class schedule together. Point out the classes your child really enjoys.	Praise your child’s hard work and point out small successes. Your encouragement can boost your child’s self-esteem as the school year kicks into gear.