

Starting school



Routines

When getting your child ready to attend school it is important to have a routine in place. The earlier you start to introduce a routine the easier it will be for you when your child goes to school. Having a good routine is good for you too - you might find some time for yourself!

Decide what time to get up:

You will need to work out what time you will need to get your child up when going to school. Take into consideration who will be dropping off, are they going to a before school club, how far the school is from your house and how long do you think it will take to get everyone up and ready. For example: if you need to drop off at the school for 8.45am, live 15 minutes away from the school and need an hour to get everyone ready - you will need to get everyone up at 7.30am. Top tip: give yourself time to get up and ready before waking your children, so you can focus on them and not feel rushed. While school is not here yet, start getting them into the way of getting up in the morning at this time. This will get them in the habit of a good routine when school does start.

Setting out clothes:

As part of your bedtime routine, help your child to pick out clothes for the next day. When school arrives, this will help support you in making sure they have their uniform out for the next day, PE kit if needed and their school bag ready to go. When you get them up in the morning, their clothes will be ready for them to put on. This will help your routine run more smoothly and gives you one less thing to worry about.

Healthy breakfast:

It is important to ensure your child has a good breakfast to start the day. This will give them the energy and concentration skills to allow them to focus on tasks set. Encourage your child to make choices at breakfast such as between two cereals or pieces of fruit. This is also a great time to encourage independence; why not have cereals in a tub with a scoop for your child to serve themselves and milk in a jug?

Daily activities and chores:

When at school your child will have tasks to complete throughout the day, some which will be to their liking and some will not. It is important to have that balance because it builds up their perseverance and resilience. Agree daily activities with them to help focus their concentration skills and then set them chores to do – one each day. This might involve something they don't like such as tidying up their toys or helping match socks to put away. By giving them daily tasks and chores, you are supporting them for when they go to school and they need to be more focused.

Lunchtime and Dinner time:

Consider the times of snack time, afternoon snack and lunchtime at school – this is generally 10.30am, 12.30pm and 3.30pm (home or afterschool). Try to encourage your child to have a snack at snack time and possibly even garden play like they would at play time. Again, emulate lunchtime at the same time with a similar choice to school ie: packed lunch, etc. It is important that you consider what time you will need to have dinner. You don't want it to be too close to bedtime. Ideally dinnertime should be between 5pm and 6pm. You may need to plan your dinners in advance to work in with work commitments and when you get home. Many working parents prepare dinners in advance, so they are ready just to heat when they get home.

Bedtime routine:

Settle on a good bedtime routine and remember the getting ready for bedtime is as important as getting into bed. Take into consideration what needs to be done at bedtime – bath/shower, brush teeth, brush hair and get into pyjamas. Start this process 30 minutes before you want your child to be in bed. Encourage your child to be independent in getting ready for bed. Allow your child to select which clothes they are going to wear tomorrow – why not check a weather app to help them with their decisions? Allow them to select a book to read with you before going to sleep. Evidence shows that reading to your child for 10 minutes a day helps your child feel loved, supported and allows them to develop a love of reading which will help support them in their reading and literacy skills. The quicker you get your child back into the habit of going to bed at a set time, the easier it will be for you when school starts. Most experts agree that children need between 9 and 10 hours of sleep each night to be at their best.





Thinking about lunch

This experience will support your child in their understanding about how different lunchtimes may be. It provides the opportunity to make choices and use their fine motor skills in preparing their lunch.

- Firstly, decide if your child will be having a packed lunch or a school dinner
- If your child is having a school dinner it is likely that they will have to make a choice between different healthy options, carry a tray to their table and pour their own drinks. Practice these skills at home. You could role play a school canteen or incorporate some of these elements to your dinner times at home, inviting your child to make choices, carry a tray and pour their drink from a jug
- If they are having a packed lunch, go and choose a lunchbox together
- Help your child choose what food to put in their lunchbox - talk about healthy options. Help your child make their lunch for their packed lunchbox - sandwich with filling, piece of fruit, yogurt, juice or water
- Practice having a packed lunch together at home making sure your child is able to undo the packets for example the lid from their yogurt or open their snack bar themselves. When they are finished, encourage them to empty their rubbish into the bin. This will support you when they do go to school by not having half eaten lunch return home.





Colour and size sorting socks

This experience supports your child's matching and sorting skills. It involves challenge in that they are in fact sorting them not only into pairs but into categories.

- When sorting the laundry to put away put all the socks into a bag or basket
- Ask your child to come and help you with the laundry
- Tell them you need them to be a big helper today. This gives them a sense of responsibility
- You need help with the socks. They have got all mixed up and you are worried that you will end up wearing their socks!
- Tell them they need to lay out the socks and find the one that matches. They need to then decide who the socks belong to and sort them into a bundle for each person
- Encourage them to preserve until all the socks are matched!





Name recognition pegs

This experience supports your child's phonetic awareness and name recognition. As they find the letters you are also supporting their matching skills.

- Start by writing each letter of your child's name on a peg ensuring that you use a capital letter for the first letter and lowercase letters for the remaining letters. Write your child's name on a piece of card
- Invite your child to match the peg letters to the letters on the card
- Sound each letter of your child's name as they find them. Ensure that you do this phonetically, for example if your child's name is "Charlie" explain to them that the "C" and the "h" together make a "Ch" sound.

