



Back to School Checklist

- Mutual expectations
- Realistic goals
- Boundaries
- School supplies
- Study location
- Homework rules
- Concerns
- Teachers
- School rules
- Extracurricular activities

10 Back to School Tips for Parents and Kids

by Julianne Dueber

WELL, PARENTS, it's about time for your kids to go back to school. You may be a bit relieved, but don't feel guilty. The fact is the kids are chomping at the bit to get back and see their friends on a daily basis even though it means going to classes and studying. You can help prepare them to start back to school with the right attitude. It's best to talk to them one on one, to be sure that they are engaged in the conversation. They will be pleased to have your undivided attention. The following tips apply to children of all ages, even those going off to college.

- 1.** Pick a time when your child seems open and willing to talk to you without distractions. Often you will find the best time is in the car. Ask about his expectations for the coming school year and discuss your expectations for him. This conversation will help to set the tone for the entire school year, and may give you valuable clues about possible problems ahead.
- 2.** Talk to him about his goals. Chances are he won't have any. This is a great opportunity to help him set realistic goals. Remember that if he doesn't have a road map for how he's going to "do school," his chances for doing well will not be as good.
- 3.** Talk about how you are willing to help him with his schoolwork. This is also a good time to tell him what you will or will not do. Kids will lean on you to do as much as you are willing. By setting these boundaries before school starts, you will help him learn that getting through school is his job, not yours.
- 4.** Get those school supplies and watch for sales. Lots of discount stores have school supply specials throughout the autumn months.
- 5.** Organize a good place for your child to study. If he has a special place to do his work, he will be more focused and motivated.
- 6.** Discuss with your child which appropriate rules the two of you think are advisable for getting him to learn well. What times will you require that he do his homework? Your decision on this one will depend on your child. Is he a procrastinator? Does he have good discipline? Sometimes, children are better off getting their homework out of the way as soon as they get home from school—while they're still in the school frame of mind. Others need a chance to decompress from the school day, but will have the discipline to do the work after a nice, long rest. Encourage your child to engage in physical activity after school since he has





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been sitting down all day. He needs it and it will help him focus more easily on his homework.

7. Ask him what concerns he has for the coming school year. Help him work through all of the ghosts that are lurking in his mind. Sometimes kids work themselves into a frenzy just thinking about school—especially if they have had trouble in the past. Help him work through his emotional baggage. If you see that he is truly distraught about returning, enlist the

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help of his teachers and his school counselor. You don't have to solve this one alone. The sooner you help him to understand and handle his problems, the easier his future school life will be. One thing is certain: If he has fears and difficulties with school, you will have to be an active helper in his education to get him on the right track. The child that exasperates you today will most likely turn out to be a good, well-educated citizen. Often, you will make the difference in his life—one way or the other. Good luck and keep the faith.

8. Talk to him about his teachers. Explain to him that he has to be very flexible when he has new teachers because he might not like one or two of them. Sometimes kids refuse to work for a teacher they don't like, not realizing they're only hurting themselves. If your child has trouble with a teacher, enlist that teacher's help to change things. The best approach is to tell the teacher that you would like to help make his job easier by working with your child at home. Teachers like to feel that they are part of a partnership with parents.

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9. Read and discuss the student manual. Make sure that your child understands the school's rules. Explain anything he does not understand. He will then be armed to navigate the school's culture and stay out of trouble. If your kid is the kind to test boundaries, make sure he understands the forthcoming consequences. And, be sure and let him know that you support the school's rules and expect him to do the same.

10. If he doesn't have any extracurricular activities planned for the year, discuss what he might be interested in doing. Let him know that these activities are also an important part of the school experience.

The new school year can be an exciting time, but can also be full of trepidation for students. Letting your child know what your expectations are, as well as the fact that you're there to support him, can help get both of you off to a stronger start. ■

Julianne Dueber is the author of Peterson's *The Ultimate High School Survival Guide* and is a passionate advocate for middle and high school teens.

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dis.organi.zation

1. a disorder commonly found in children of school age. 2. a condition whose symptoms frequently include incomplete homework and/or poor time management. 3. a state of behavior often misinterpreted as lack of motivation and/or of effort. 4. a major source of frustration to parents and teachers.

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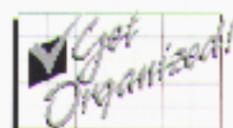
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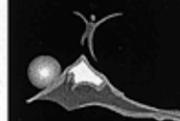
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