

Preparing Children for School

The first day of school is an important event in a child's life and for parents. A good first day at school helps shape a child's future attitudes toward school and supports their healthy growth and development. Good health, independence and confidence are important assets for the first day of school.

School marks entrance into a new universe of friendship, learning and adventure. Learning to like school relates closely to an enjoyment of learning. A child's first school experience can contribute to a good or bad attitude toward school in the years ahead. Parents play an important role in making sure that children feel successful.

Following are some tips for parents:

- Talk with your child about their fears and concerns, likes and dislikes, as well as the fun and importance of school. Treat going to school as part of the normal course of events. Let your child see your positive attitude toward school.



- Prepare your child for the new school experience by explaining what to expect and answering all questions honestly. Knowing details helps children handle stress. Children need to know the number of days per week they will be in school and the length of each day. Will they eat breakfast and lunch there? How can they reach mom, dad, family or friends? What about arrangements for before and after school care? Be clear about transportation plans and safety rules. Visit the school building and meet the teacher.
- Prepare to handle your own feelings. Many children do very well on the first day, and it is the parent who experiences adjustment difficulties. Allow time and find support to get used to the transitions and changes you are experiencing with your children.
- If a child cries or is very upset when going to school, try not to overreact. Briefly comfort and reassure them, be direct and say goodbye. Usually the sad feelings will soon disappear.
- Create a normal routine atmosphere at home the first few days of school. Starting school means getting used to a more structured environment and schedule. Set bed times and waking up times to allow enough rest and to reduce the morning rush. Give your child some free playtime at home to relax.
- Spend time each day to talk with your child about school and take an active interest in what they tell you. Be a good listener. Discuss both positive and negative aspects.
- Visit your child's school often. Get to know your child's teacher. Find out how you can get involved and help at school.
- Get acquainted with your children's classmates and their parents and teachers by holding an ice cream social at your home, at the school or a park.

Ready to Read...Ready to Learn

Reading with a child is one of the most special gifts you can give. By starting early, you will build a child's life-long interest in books and a hunger for learning that can lead to success in school and anything else they do later in life.

Make time to read together each day. Choose a time when you can be relaxed and not rushed. Give yourself time to read slowly so that your child can enjoy and absorb the story. Be sure to let them ask questions as you read. You may also want to ask your child questions. This helps you check their understanding of the story and encourages memory development.

When you read together often, you learn about the types of books a child likes and understands. Look for books that relate to what's happening in the child's life at the time.

Babies & Toddlers – Very young children are attracted to brightly colored pictures of simple objects. They are listeners and respond well to books with simple words and good rhythms. Wordless books stimulate them and encourage creating different stories. Board and cloth books are durable and enjoyable at this age.

Pre-school and Kindergarten – These children like listening to slightly complex text with good rhythm and word repetition. They enjoy toy-like books that may pop-up, move or get them involved. Mother Goose, nursery rhymes, and stories about familiar objects and experiences appeal to this age.

Early School Years (Ages 5-8) – Picture books with strong story lines and characters are good for this age. For the child who can read independently, choose a book with a straightforward story that uses familiar words they use everyday.

Older Children (Ages 9-12 and older) – Reading skills will allow most children to read independently. Select books that fit the child's personality, preferences, and interests. Informational, non-fiction books as well as novels about a topic may be enjoyable. Look for whether they are appropriate for the child's age and maturity level.

The time and attention you give your child has many benefits in addition to helping him be ready for school.

Help children be ready to read and learn by:

1. Reading to your baby every day. Hearing words over and over helps your child become familiar with them.
2. Using sounds, songs, gestures, and words that rhyme to help your baby learn about language and its many uses.
3. Pointing out the printed words in your home and other places you take your child, such as the grocery store.
4. Taking children's books and writing materials with you whenever you leave home.
5. Creating a quiet, special place in your home for your child to read, write and draw.
6. Setting a good example for your child by reading books, newspapers and magazines.
7. Limiting the amount and type of television you and your child watch.
8. Make regular visits to the library and pick out books together or attend special reading events.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Take advantage of parent-teacher conferences during the school year. Think of some questions and concerns you may have and write them down before your meeting. Keep track of your child's schoolwork to be aware of their progress or difficulties, and make notes for your next conference. Questions you may want to ask are:

- Is my child performing at grade level or developmental age?
- What are my child's strengths and weaknesses in subjects such as reading, math, science?
- How much time should my child spend on homework?
- Are my child's assignments completed accurately and on time?
- How has my child been behaving in class and with other children?
- Does my child have special learning needs? Are there special classes my child should be in?
- What can I do to help my child succeed in school?
- Can the teacher review with me other work my child has done?

Parental Involvement Contributes to Children's Success in School

Parents are the most important influence in a child's success in school and in life. You can help your child succeed by providing a home that encourages learning and supports your child's physical, mental, and emotional development. You can also help by working with the school and other community groups that impact your child and other children.

Decades of research show that when parents are involved, students have higher grades, test scores, graduation rates, and are more likely to go to college. They also have better school attendance and lower rates of suspension. Students with involved parents are more motivated and have higher self-esteem. They are less likely to use drugs and alcohol, or to use violent behavior.

Following are some ways to help your child succeed:

1. Regularly talk with your child.
2. Set high but realistic expectations and goals.
3. Build your child's self-esteem and confidence.
4. Keep your child healthy – ensure they get enough rest and eat nutritious foods.
5. Parents are the first teachers – support learning at home.
6. Communicate and stay connected with your child's school.
7. Encourage exploration and discovery.
8. Help your child develop a circle of friends and good, healthy relationships.
9. Keep your child safe at home, school, and the neighborhood.
10. Participate in community service activities.

Oklahoma Parenting Helpline

Being a parent is a hard job. Sometimes it can feel like things are getting out of control, or there is no one that understands. The Oklahoma Parenting Helpline is there for such times - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Just call toll-free at **1-877-446-6865**.

When you call the Parenting Helpline, you will reach someone who knows how to listen without judging, who cares about families, wants to help but not interfere. The volunteers at the Parenting Helpline realize that there are times when a parent's patience runs out, they feel that everything they have tried has failed and they are sick or tired, but their kids still need attention. You can also receive booklets or other information to help you with such topics as child development, discipline and guidance, and other concerns. Referrals to resources and agencies in your area are also offered.

No matter where you live in Oklahoma, the Parenting Helpline can assist you. Call **1-877-446-6865**.

Child & Family WebGuide

The Internet has an overwhelming amount of information and often it is difficult to know whether a source can be trusted. Where can you go for good information on child development and parenting topics? Check out the **Child and Family WebGuide at www.cfw.tufts.edu**.

The WebGuide is the creation of Tufts University with support by the Society for Research in Child Development. It offers an online rating and review guide of websites and has links to information on 130 different child-related topics.

The WebGuide is designed and useful for parents, students, educators, child development professionals, and the general public. The main categories are family, education, health, typical development, and child care. Each website included on the WebGuide is rated and has a summary description.

How Are You Doing?

Answer how many of the following steps reflect how you are involved with your child's school experience:

- I know how much homework my child has each night.
- I review homework and check papers daily.
- I attend PTA meetings.
- I spend one-on-one time with my child.
- I provide books and read at home.
- I attend extra-curricular activities.
- I talk with my child's teacher regularly.
- I make sure my child has a nutritious breakfast each day.
- I make sure my child gets enough sleep and daily exercise.
- I frequently praise my child for making an effort as well as achievement.

If you answered yes to the majority of these statements, congratulations! You are helping your child to have the best chance to succeed in school. If you answered no to more than half of these statements, think about those areas and how they to make changes that will benefit your child.

Avoid the Morning Rush - Tips to Reduce Stress

- ✓ Start going to bed earlier.
- ✓ Place all items you carry to work or school in one place.
- ✓ Get ready for the morning the night before – choose clothing, prepare lunches, bags and backpacks.
- ✓ Set your clocks ahead 10 or 15 minutes.
- ✓ Get up at least 1-1/2 hours before leaving for work or school.
- ✓ Dress yourself before waking others.
- ✓ Have a morning routine...have children do the same things in order.
- ✓ Make games out of getting ready. Turn on fun music, or sing a song together. Be careful about turning on the TV or videos.
- ✓ Take time for breakfast.
- ✓ Keep bedtimes and wake-up times the same...even on weekends.

- ✓ Tell the children what they and you will be doing during the day.
- ✓ Say to yourself and the children that it will be a good day!
- ✓ Reward yourself for arriving at work or school on time!



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