

First Day of School

This Preschool Checklist will help you prepare for your child's first day of school.



Starting school is such a significant transition for a child, it's very important to get it right as a child's first days may affect the way they feel about school forever. Your behaviour on the first day of school can also affect your child's long-term school career. The idea is to be happy, smiling and let your child know education is a great thing!

Get Ready For School – Before Registering:

Immunization: Most states now require proof of immunization before they will allow children to attend school. State laws vary regarding which immunizations are needed but the majority of states require proof that your child has received at least the following immunizations:-

- Three doses (3) of Tetanus, Diphtheria & Pertussis
- Three doses (3) of Tetanus & Diphtheria
- Three doses (3) of Polio vaccine
- Two doses (2) each of Measles, Mumps, & Rubella after one year of age.

Proof of immunization consists of a written record indicating the month, day & year that your child was immunized. The only exemptions to the school immunization requirements are medical reasons, religious beliefs or a strong personal conviction opposing immunizations. Has your child's vision and hearing been checked before he or she begins school? If problems are found early in your child's development they may be able to be corrected or other strategies implemented to cope with potential problems.

Get Ready For School – School Details:

School name:		Child has been registered:	Yes / No
Postal address:			
	Zip/Postcode:		
School phone number:		School fax number:	
School web page:		School email address:	
Principal:		School Secretary:	
Teacher:		School Nurse:	

School's Medication Policy:

It's important to know your school's rules about handling & distributing medicine in case your child is well enough to go to school but needs medication during school hours. Your child should also understand clearly the medication instructions so that they know things are being done properly.

Get Ready For School – The School's Expectations:

Find out in advance what the school expects from new kindergarten students. If you know the school's expectations a year or two ahead of time you will be in a better position to prepare your child. Is there a school readiness test? What is involved in this test? If you don't agree with your school's expectations for your child, you may want to meet with the principal or kindergarten teacher to talk about this.

Get Ready For School – School Visit:

Parent Orientation:

Some schools will hold orientation meetings for parents who are enrolling their children in kindergarten. If your school doesn't plan such a meeting, call the principal's office to ask for information and to arrange a visit.

Child Orientation:

Visit the school with your child before their first day. Walk up and down the hallways pointing out the classrooms, the library, the toilets, the playground, the gym & the cafeteria (if applicable). For boys, make sure they have used a urinal before starting school (many boys have only been to the female toilets with their mothers) this can be source of teasing from the older boys. Water is a basic necessity so ensure your child knows how to use a water fountain/bubbler (i.e. not to put their mouth on the source & how to turn it on). During your visit make positive comments about the school then reinforce those comments when you are at home. If you can, meet the kindergarten teacher and introduce them to your child.

Talk with your child about how the teacher will help them learn new things. Explain how important and exciting the things that he or she will learn in school. Things like reading, writing, arithmetic, science, art and music.

If you know other children that will be going to school with your child, invite them around for a play during the holidays before their first day.

Get Ready For School – Travel Plans - How is your child getting to school?

Walking or Biking:

Will they be walking to school with others - a brother, sister, neighbour or friend?
 Have you planned a walking route & does your child know the most direct way to & from school?
 Have you tested the route with your child?
 Do they understand how to obey all traffic signals, signs, traffic officers & safety patrols?
 Do they know to walk their bike through traffic signals & crossings?
 Do they understand that they need to be extra careful in rainy, foggy or snowy weather?
 Does your child know to stay away from parks, vacant lots, fields & other places where there aren't many people around?
 Have you taught your child never to talk to strangers, or accept rides or gifts from strangers? Remember, a stranger is anyone you or your child doesn't know well or doesn't trust.

Car:

Do they know to wear a seatbelt in the car?
 Don't drive away until they have entered the school-yard or building.
 If car-pooling, does your child know the drop off & pick up point?
 Is the drop off & pick up point as close to school as possible?

Bus:

Riding the school bus can be an exciting adventure.
 Have you travelled on a bus with your child?
 Have you shown them how to enter & exit the bus holding the rail, how to move around a moving bus & how to sit properly?
 Does your child know the drop off & pick up point?
 Does your child know the time the bus picks them up & drops them off, & the need to be on time?
 Do they know about the **Danger Zone** & to take 10 giant steps beyond the front bumper of the bus before you turn to cross the street?
 Do they know to stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop & the driver signals them to enter?
 If they have to walk from the bus stop have you planned a travel route? (see walking)
 Do they know what to do if they miss the bus?

Get Ready For School – School Lunches:

Packed Lunches:

Children tend to eat healthier if they have a say in preparing a meal.
 Foods need to be either non-perishable or able to be kept in a lunchbox for half the day.
 Have you asked your child what they would like to eat for their school lunches?
 Have you considered making a weekly school lunch menu with your child's assistance?
 What sort of containers will the food be put into?
 Is the box insulated so that food is kept at the right temperature or do you have re-freezable ice packs to keep the food cold?
 Does your child know how to open their lunch box?
 Do they know how to open cling wrap packages & drink containers?
 Have you got some special notes telling your child how special they are to put into their boxes? This can boost self-esteem & make their school day more enjoyable.

School Cafeteria:

Does your child know how to get to the cafeteria/lunchroom?
 Do they understand the rules of the cafeteria?

Get Ready For School – Backpack or School Bag:

Most schools will provide a list of what is required on the first day.
 Do they have a sweater/jumper? Do they have tissues?
 Do they have a security item like a stuffed toy or photo, to take with them?

Get Ready For School – First Day:

Be early! Don't panic your child or yourself by having to rush.
 As your child leaves home for his first day of kindergarten, let him know how proud you are.
 Go to school with your child - but don't stay too long - and be patient. Many young children are overwhelmed at first, because they haven't had much experience in dealing with new situations.
 They may not like school immediately. Your child may cry or cling to you when you say goodbye each morning but with support from you and their teacher this can change rapidly.
 Be prepared for your own feelings - it can be a very emotional time for you as well.
 Consider volunteering at your school - the teachers might appreciate having an extra adult to help do everything from passing out paper and pencils to supervising children on the playground.