Transition to Kindergarten

How you can prepare your child for school next year

Things to do this year:

✓ Make it Simple and Relaxed
  o Use incidental and everyday experiences
  o Do not stress – make small changes one at a time

✓ Advise the school of special needs, such as:
  o Hearing and vision impairment
  o Learning difficulties
  o Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD
  o Medical conditions (e.g. allergies, diabetes)

✓ Promote Independence
  o Carry his/her own bag to kindergarten or child care
  o Dress themselves
  o Encourage them to express what they want
  o Let your child answer questions (do not answer everything for them!)
  o Practise making choices
  o Practice conversation skills

✓ Let your child know what school is like
  o Drive past on weekends or when students are at school
  o Talk about the exciting new things children do at school (e.g. sport, art, show-and-tell)
  o Read stories about starting school
  o Answer his/her questions in a positive manner

✓ Prepare your child for separation
  o If your child is not used to being away from you, organise for them to spend time at friends’ or relatives’ houses without you
  o Begin with short separations first (e.g. 10 min) then build these up to afternoons or days
  o To assist your child to feel comfortable with the separation, you can provide them with an interesting activity to do
  o Always pick them up at the time you said you will
  o If your child becomes upset, prolonging your leaving can make the situation worse
  o Give your child a hug and reassure them that you will be back by X time.
    Then give a cheery “See you at X, honey.” turn and leave.
  o Don’t sneak out without saying goodbye (this will give your child the impression that you cannot be trusted)
Things to do weeks before school starts

✔ **Practice school skills at home**
  - Work on skills to become more independent and organised at school
    - Opening food from lunch box (do not eat most of their food at recess)
    - Packing school bag
    - Listening to and following teacher’s instructions
    - Putting up their hand to ask a question

✔ **Establish and maintain routines before and after school**
  - Bedtime routine: Primary school-aged children need 10-11 hours of sleep.
    - Choose an hour when you know your child shows signs of tiredness.
    - Develop a routine – say goodnight to everyone, brush teeth, read a story, lights out
    - Allow at least half an hour between the last activity (e.g. watching TV) and lights out to let the child wind down
  - Establish morning routine
    - Write/draw steps or tasks to do in the morning (e.g. getting dressed, breakfast, brushing teeth). Put it up (e.g. in the bathroom or bedroom) for the child to see.
    - Have a few “trial runs” at getting your child ready by a certain time before school starts
    - Praise your child if he/she is able to do it
  - Encourage your child to have play visits with friends who will also be attending the same school
    - You can arrange your child to meet with his/her friends on the morning of the first day of school, so that your child has a friend to enter the classroom and begin the day with.

Things to do the night before school starts

✔ **Take it easy. You don’t want to create too much excitement or anxiety in your children.**

✔ **Get organised**
  - Make sure your child’s uniform is ironed, school bag is packed (in conjunction with your child), lunch is prepared, toothbrush/combs are in a regular place

✔ **Go to bed at a sensible time**
  - Put your bedtime routine to work

The first day of school

✔ **Remember to have a healthy breakfast**

✔ **Arrive to school with time to spare (do not rush)**
Beware of your own anxieties

- Most parents will feel excited and anxious as their children makes a big step forward to school
- Children can sense the emotions you have and may interpret school as something fearful or unpleasant
- On the first day of school, be relaxed. Have confidence in your child that he/she has the ability to cope with the transition
- If you have a positive attitude to school, so will your child
- You may feel emotional on your child’s first day of school. Try to hold your emotions until you get back to your car.

Be specific when you ask your child how his/her day at school was. If you ask a general question like “How was school today?”, you will likely get “Good” and nothing else. You can instead ask him/her:

- “Who did you play with at recess?”
- “What game did you play in sports today?”
- “Who had show-and-tell today?”
- “What was the best thing you did today?”

Focus on the positives so that your child will have a positive attitude towards school.

In the weeks following the first day of school

- Keep to your routine
- Seek feedback from your child’s teacher
- Approach staff with any questions or important information
- Do not be over-concerned if there is an initial difficulty.
  - Though most children do settle readily into school, some don’t. All children are different. Be patient and give enough time for your child to settle in.
- If your child has persistent difficulties settling in, discuss with your child’s teacher. You can also try the following strategies:
  - Listen to your child
  - Reassure him/her that school is a safe place where she can have lots of fun and learn lots of wonderful things.
  - Don’t bargain with your child.
  - Attending school is non-negotiable, and your child needs to understand this. Resist any temptation to allow your child to stay home (unless he/she is genuinely ill). Do not allow your child to stay home for special occasions (e.g. birthdays). If your child is absent from school due to illness, keep activities low key during the day.
- Help your child build his/her resilience
  - Help him/her to be brave. Encourage him/her to try new things. Do not do everything for them (to promote independent learning).
o Teach him/her to stand up for himself/herself or be assertive (e.g. “I do not like it when you push me. Stop it or I’ll tell the teacher.” – say it in a firm voice.)

o Teach them to bounce back when they fall. Model positive thinking by saying aloud your thinking process (e.g. “A few things didn’t go well today, but tomorrow will be another day. It will be a good day!”)

o Teach them problem-solving skills (e.g. “STOP, THINK, DO”). Stop for a minute and think about different solutions to the problem. After that, pick the best solution and do it.

o Praise them for trying new things, or when they are able to show resilience

✓ Focus on the positives at school

o When talking about school with your child, remember to focus on the positives (e.g. “What is the best thing about school today?”). This will help your child build a positive attitude towards school. If you pay too much attention on the negatives, he or she will eventually learn to focus on the negative aspects of school. (Note: Children love the attention from parents and if talking about negative events helps them gain their parents’ attention, they will do it more often!)

✓ Believe that your child has the abilities to cope with change!

This handout is prepared by Mimi Kan (School Counsellor / Psychologist). Please call the school or email her at mimi.kan@det.nsw.edu.au if you have any questions.
Example of a Morning Checklist or Reward Chart:

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<th>Tues</th>
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