

Back to School Tips and Strategies

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It's that time again: Back to school! This is the perfect time to establish and define back to school habits and develop routines to make your household less stressed. From creating a "bus stop" station for school belongings to organizing "play-dates" to make homework more fun, here are some back to school tips to make your school year a success!

Back to School Routines

- Prepare lunch and perhaps even set out breakfast (non-perishable) the night before.
- Limit caffeine and sugary snacks when it is close to bedtime.
- Reduce excessive use of technology (television, non-educational computer games, cell phone, etc.) on school nights and replace these activities with reading time, computer research or educational games.
- Read (or listen) to your child as a bedtime ritual for at least 20 minutes.
- Create a "Back to School Chore Chart" so your child will know what habits he or she needs to continue once school responsibilities are in the mix! Some examples might include:

Morning Responsibilities:

- Put on school clothes
- Brush hair
- Make your bed
- Eat breakfast
- Brush teeth and floss
- Place school items (homework, projects, etc.) in your backpack
- Prepare and pack lunch and snack

After school Responsibilities:

- Place items in the "Mom and dad" mailbox
- Change clothes
- Place laundry in hamper
- Eat snack
- Enjoy playtime break
- Clean room
- Set table
- Complete homework
- Eat dinner
- Clear table
- Shower, brush teeth and floss

- Set out clothes for next day
- Prepare book bag for next day and place at the door
- Read for 20 minutes

Back to School “Homework Play Dates”

- Organize study and homework “play dates” or “study dates” with your child’s friends.
- Confirm which adult will be supervising.
- Create a schedule of start and finish times.
- Exchange contact information with the parents.
- Try to select friends within walking distance or close driving distance.
- Review the homework assignments so you can better supervise completion.
- Create games with flashcards for the children to use.
- Provide healthy snacks.
- Keep the study group limited to only a few children, but rotate locations so all parents will have an opportunity to host.
- Leave time for the homework date to turn into a “play date” after all homework is completed.
- Share your child’s learning style with the supervising adults. Visit mychildsfuture.org/parents/item.htm?id=29&edlvl=1 to learn more about learning styles.
- Describe your child’s study style and techniques. For example, does your child prefer studying with a lamp or a bright light? What about a soft chair or even the floor? Research shows both good and bad effects of listening to music while studying. Visit emedexpert.com/tips/music.shtml to learn more about music and learning.

Back to School Organizational Tips

- Create a wall calendar and corkboard area to place important homework assignment, class schedules, appointments, school dates to remember, etc.
- Create a “Mom and Dad’s Mailbox” in which your child can place papers each day.
- Create color-coded folders for class lists, medical information, school directories, fieldtrips, etc. for each child.
- Create boxes for storage, like books, crayons, paper, etc. for less clutter.
- Create index cards for dinner ideas to keep your weekly meal planner manageable. Be sure to include “make your own sandwich” day!
- Confirm your emergency backup contact person and be ready to share this information with the school.
- Create a daily checklist for you and your child to make sure you have what you need before leaving home (soccer equipment, tennis shoes for P.E, etc.).
- Create a “bus stop station” for backpacks, umbrellas, jackets, rain boots, etc.
- Create a “lunch station” for both refrigerated and dry snacks for easy access before and after school.
- Create a “homework station” that aligns with your child’s learning style.
- Decorate and fill a basket, bin or even an old briefcase with school supplies so the “homework station” will be well organized.

For more information, please visit the Family and Community Engagement website located at knoxschools.org.