

End of Summer Back to School Tips



Going back to school can be a tough transition, particularly after the relative ease of summer. Whether you're a family with a college bound student or grade school trekker, taking a few hours to prepare can make a big difference in how you begin your school year.

1. (Grade School) Start with structure early: An earlier wakeup may leave your kids tired and sluggish. Help them be at their best by reestablishing structure a few weeks before the school year begins. Eat meals at the same approximate time each day and enforce bed and wakeup times. The more closely you can mimic your school's schedule, the better.

2. (College) Avoid dangerous party rituals: Research links excessive alcohol consumption among college students to lower grades and higher incidences of assault and rape. Avoid events and people that are likely to expose you to negative peer pressure.

3. (Both) Get organized: Put together a checklist of needed supplies and have them ready before school starts. Prepare and label all notebooks and folders ahead of time. Copy class schedules and tape them inside of folders along with maps and directions to classrooms and buildings.

4. (Grade school)

Address fears and anxiety: Returning to school is stressful for some children. Encourage your kids to express any negative emotions they may have. Treat their concerns with respect while pointing out some of the more positive aspects of the new school year like being reunited with old friends.

5. (College) Use college counseling resources: Moving to campus often means leaving a good part of your social safety net behind. A change in environment can magnify problems. Almost all colleges offer free or low cost mental health resources. Take advantage of them if you feel overwhelmed, out of control, depressed or isolated.

6. (Both) Do a walk through: Visiting the school ahead of time and doing a practice run is a good way to ensure a smooth first day. Take a notebook and jot down important locations and rehearse your routine.

7. (Grade School) Bone up on bullying: Bullying occurs across all age ranges and can happen to both boys and girls. Bullying isn't always physical. It can also include gossip, taunts, and malicious exclusion. Children sometimes don't report bullying out of fear and embarrassment.

Arm your child with information and resources by visiting <http://www.bullying.org>.

8. (College) Practice time management: Cramming for tests is less effective than studying in smaller chunks over time. Begin developing good time management skills by planning and sticking to a study schedule. Treating your schoolwork like an 8 hour a day job will make you more effective and help you prepare for life after college.

9. (Both) Don't over schedule: If extracurricular activities begin to be more of a chore than a fun break, then you're probably overdoing things. Back off and reprioritize.

10. (Both) Keep the focus on learning: Don't make getting good grades your end goal. Instead, treat them as a way of measuring progress. Understand that everyone has strengths and weaknesses. Struggling with schoolwork does not make you stupid. Try to find real world applications for everything you're taught.