

Back-to-School Countdown: A 4-Week Plan to Get Ready



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Week 1



Write an introduction letter to the teacher. Include your child's strengths, weaknesses and challenges—plus strategies that have worked in the past.

Casually talk with your child about the school year ahead. Encourage him to express his hopes and concerns.

Let your child pick out a new outfit or two. Feeling confident about what he's wearing can help him focus on schoolwork instead of appearance.

Visit your child's doctor to complete all required health forms and discuss any medication adjustments.

Help your child connect with other kids in his class. This can take some of the social pressure off of the first day of school.

See if the school will give you a class list. Schedule playdates for younger kids. Encourage older kids to text or call classmates.

To prepare for the school reading load ahead, carve out extra time to encourage your child to read alone and with you.

Week 2

Encourage your child to start thinking about which after-school activities he might be interested in trying this year.

If your child has an IEP, set up the first team meeting of the year. Brainstorm with your child about possible goals.

If your child has a 504 plan, be prepared to meet with his teachers to discuss classroom accommodations.

If you're anticipating any problems, you may want to meet with the 504 team at the very beginning of the year.

Talk through organizational systems for your child. Consider color-coding binders, folders and more.

Shop for school supplies together. Getting kids involved in the planning stages can smooth the transition to school.



Find out when school orientation is and plan to attend it. Make a list of questions for teachers and counselors about your child's specific needs.

Organize your family's school-year schedule. Create a shared online calendar or color-coded wall calendar. Start using it now so it's familiar to everyone.

Sunday

Week 3

How can you streamline your morning routines? Consider what would make before-school hours simpler for everyone.

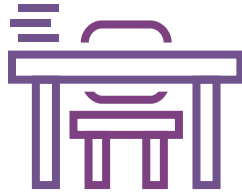
Monday

Visit the school together, even if he's been there before. Find his classroom, the nearest bathrooms, the nurse's office and any specialists' rooms.

If he has a locker, help him find it and practice using the lock. (If there's a built-in lock, ask for the combination in advance.)

Tuesday

When and where will he do his homework? Work with your child to create a space where he can keep school materials organized.



Wednesday

For younger kids, start adjusting eating and sleeping schedules to school-year hours. Encourage teens to do the same.

Thursday

Practice the morning commute to school. Do it a few times before school starts.

If he's taking the bus, walk together to the stop to see if he's ready to do it alone. Discuss contingency plans, such as what to do if he misses the bus.

Friday

Organize a three-ring binder for keeping your child's school records. Make room for new forms and paperwork from teachers or the IEP team.

Saturday

Take some time to just relax and enjoy one another's company.



Week 4

Role-play different social situations your child might encounter.

Help your child think through how he would...

- Self-advocate in the classroom
- Handle problems on the playground
- Ask a friend to sit with him at lunch

Talk through where your child can go at school for emotional support. This can make him feel more at ease.

Rehearse things your child might say when other kids or teachers ask how his summer was, or what he did over the break.

Work together to choose outfits for the first week of school. Discuss what your child would like to take for lunch.

Meet with your child's new teachers to review his IEP or 504. Don't assume they will have read his paperwork.

Go over your child's schedule together. Point out the classes he really enjoys.

If he's switching classrooms for the first time, assure him that most teachers will understand if he's a couple minutes late for a few days.

Praise your child to boost his self-esteem. Let him start the year knowing his strengths outweigh his challenges!

