

Starting Your Child in School

Here are some tips on making the first transition to school a smooth and comfortable one...

Young children live in the present and concepts of future time are confusing to them. Therefore, counting down the days until school starts may only cause anxiety. Instead, begin now to indirectly prepare your child for school, building the skills and schedules that will make the first day a smooth and easy transition rather than a sudden interruption of routine.

Now is the time to start the child's independence, concentration and ability to choose. Begin teaching the skills, one at a time, which will allow her to dress herself, help prepare and eat her breakfast, and get herself ready to go. Then simply go on some small outing-run an errand or take a walk-until she is used to the routine of getting up and "on the go."

A few weeks before your child's start date, begin to adjust his sleep schedule. Decide what time he will need to wake up to allow an unhurried start to the day. Wake your child up a little earlier each morning and put him to bed a little earlier each night until he begins to naturally wake up rested and refreshed at the desired time.

This is also a good time to begin reducing television viewing in general and eliminating any TV in the morning. You won't want school to seem like a punishment the first day when it is turned off.

If you wish to discuss school with your child, do it in a low key non-specific way. You might notice the preparations in the stores you visit, "It looks like it's almost time for children to begin the school year." If your child asks what this mysterious thing called school might be, another simple answer might satisfy his question. "It's a place made especially for children where they can go each day to make friends, do their work, play games, and learn."

You can also let her know that someday she'll be ready to go to school, but try not to prejudice your child or build false expectations by being too specific about what she will do in school. That way, if she doesn't happen to paint (or whatever) on the first day, she won't be either disappointed in you or the school, or herself.

When the first day arrives and your child is all dressed and ready to go, you can announce that today is the day he/she gets to go to school, to see a teacher and meet other children.