

# FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

## Helping your child get ready

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The first day of school is a transition, and transitions — even good ones — create stress. It takes a lot of energy to adjust to a new routine and get to know new teachers and classmates. As a veteran kindergarten teacher reminds parents: “It takes most children about six weeks to adjust to a new school year. Don’t be surprised if they are tired or emotional after school for the first few weeks. They may need a little extra patience and love.” Here are three strategies for helping your child get ready for a new year.

## Talk About What to Expect

Children crave predictability and feel more confident when they know what to expect. Fred Rogers once said, “When children know ahead of time what’s going to happen — and not happen — they can prepare themselves for what’s coming. They can think about it and get used to their feelings about it.”

Talk to your child about what to expect in practical, step-by-step terms. What will the morning routine at home look like? What will they need to put in their backpack each day? How will they get to school? What will they do there?

If your school hosts a back-to-school open house or allows you to visit classrooms before the first day, be sure to attend. This will help your child visualize the new environment. Likewise, if the school provides a daily schedule, post it in the house so that you can preview it with your child and give them a sense of the order and rhythm of the school day.

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(\*) You can find the complete version of this article at: <http://www.pbs.org/parents/expert-tips-advice/2018/07/you-are-brave-and-kind-helping-your-child-get-ready-for-the-first-day-of-school/>

## Read About it

Reading books together is another way to “talk about what to expect.” Some young children may not want to share their feelings about school — or may not yet have the language to do so — but when they read about how characters are reacting and feeling, it creates a safe space for exploring these themes. Books can also help kids visualize typical school routines and scenarios. Here are some “back to school” titles you can find up at your local library.



- ▶ The Kissing Hand - Un beso en mi mano, by Audrey Penn
- ▶ Wemberly Worried - Prudencia se preocupa, by Kevin Henkes
- ▶ Chrysanthemum - Crisantemo, by Kevin Henkes
- ▶ School's First Day of School, by Adam Rex
- ▶ Otto goes to School by Todd Parr
- ▶ Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten, by Joseph Slate
- ▶ On the First Day of Kindergarten, by Tish Rabe
- ▶ This School Year Will Be the BEST!, by Kay Winters

## Remind Them: “You Are Brave and Kind”

Every child can be brave, and every child can be kind. These two traits will help children thrive socially, emotionally and academically. When you see your child acting courageously or being kind to others, point it out. These are powerful words for kids to learn as they begin to shape their sense of who they are and how they relate to others.

**Courage:** Bravery doesn't mean we are never scared! Rather, it means we do not let fear hold us back from exploring new opportunities and developing our skills. For a preschooler, kindergartener or first grader, courage might look like meeting a new teacher, saying goodbye to mom or dad in the morning, trying an activity for the first time, learning new skills that take effort or reaching out to a classmate who needs a friend

**Kindness:** As you approach the start of a new year, talk with your kids about simple ways they can show kindness to classmates: introducing themselves, sharing toys or supplies, including others at recess and lunch, offering compliments, and telling an adult if they see another child hurt or in distress.

And of course, remind your child that this school year, they will grow in every way! They will learn new skills, make new friends, and perhaps even grow an inch or two taller. Just as importantly, they will “grow on the inside.”

### ‘GROWING ON THE INSIDE’

“are the words I use when I talk with children about such things as learning to wait, learning to keep on trying, being able to talk about their feelings, and to express those feelings in constructive ways. These signs of growth need at least as much notice and applause as the outward kind, and children need to feel proud of them – even more proud than they may feel when that line on the door jamb goes up another inch.” (Fred Rogers)