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## **Tips on bringing your family back to school successfully**

Once school approaches, the first thing you must do is plan a new routine. The summer, when everything was very relaxed and children stayed up late, watched more TV and did lots of fun activities, is over. In order to get children back into school successfully you must put a plan in place for the whole family.

### **Bedtime routine**

Bedtime routines need to be reintroduced if they have been let lapse over the summer months. Agree with your children a time that is suitable for them to be in bed at and then plan what the bedtime routine will involve, things like getting washed, leaving uniforms ready for the morning, having homework done and in school bag, preparing snacks and having story time. You could introduce a checklist for the whole family which covers what has to be done and get everyone in the family to take responsibility for their jobs. Bedtime should be fun but it should also be predictable for all the family so there are no arguments. For example, once you say 8pm bedtime then you, as the parent, need to stick to this as you will see that children do a lot better in school if they're not tired and cranky from too little sleep and arguments in the morning.

### **Evening routine and homework**

Once the bedtime routine is in place you need to develop an evening routine which starts when the children get in from school – you as a family need to decide when the homework gets done. Remember, no matter what age your children are they need you to sit with them doing their homework. Until at least eight years old you may need to sit with them from start to finish. As they get older, you need to check all homework after they have finished. If you take a keen interest in your child's schoolwork it will really show in their performance – remember school journals normally need to be signed every night. Children often need help with spelling and maths so it is important to prioritise homework and some other household chores may have to wait.

### **Lunch boxes**

Get children to take responsibility for their lunch boxes from a young age, if they know what they can bring then they can choose what they want to put in their box. Remember, if they get hungry in school it is not the end of the world - they will soon learn they need to bring more food. There is no point in arguing with them over what to bring so allow them to choose where possible. There is no point in giving your child

lunch they will not eat, try to ensure they have a good breakfast and then nutritious snacks such as fresh fruit, dried apricots, raisins, popcorn, yogurts, sandwiches, cheese, crackers, fruit pots and fruit juice for their lunch box. Some children will not eat much lunch as they may be too busy playing so they will need a nutritious snack as soon as they get in from school if the evening meal doesn't happen until later when all the family are home. Remember, a lot of schools have a green policy which means no sugary foods in the lunch boxes. Get your children to be involved in the shopping and allow them to choose healthy snacks for school lunches and dinners.

### **Uniforms**

It is good to get children to take off uniforms when they get in from school and put on play clothes. This helps keep the washing down as uniforms will not get destroyed with messy dinners or outdoor play. Also try to ensure your child has some free play time when they get home – maybe a run around the park while the weather is still good as this releases energy and helps them settle down for homework.

### **Getting children involved**

Some children hate the idea of going back to school so it is important to try and make it special for them. Involve them in buying the new school bag or lunch box or the new markers or fancy note pad, as all these things make school more enjoyable. Try to get to know the parents of their friends and encourage play dates at the weekends or one day after school, usually Friday, as you want to keep to the normal routines during the week and if friends come over it may be hard to keep to the bedtime and homework routine.

### **Talking to your child**

Talk to your child about school, ask them about their friends and teacher, and what fun things they did in school. Often by making time to sit with your child and talk, you will hear things about school you would not have heard otherwise.

### **Problems at school**

If you suspect they are having problems don't be afraid to go in and meet the teacher and discuss it. Teachers are usually very happy to meet parents and get to know them as this helps them get to know your child. If your child or family are experiencing any difficulties which may be affecting your child's behaviour in school talk to the teacher so they know why a change has occurred. This way the teacher can be more sensitive to your child's needs.

### **Parent times**

Remember, as a parent you have probably enjoyed a relaxed routine for the summer but once school approaches you must also get into a new routine that fits with the children's needs. Try to find time to relax every day even if it is only for ten minutes to put your feet up or watch your favourite programme. The more time you put into planning the week the smoother it should go for the whole family.

### **Planning ahead**

Think ahead and plan for the things which can cause problems, by doing so, you can avoid them.