

How to make the grade this school year



Start talking about the upcoming school year. Listen closely for fears or concerns, advises Dr. Amie Duncan of Cincinnati Children's Hospital. "It is important that parents listen to and respond to their child's potential anxieties about the new school year, especially if they are making a big transition such as from an elementary school to a middle school. It is perfectly normal to experience first day jitters," she said. These feelings can be relieved with some of these suggestions.

Preschoolers and kindergartners need to know what will happen.

- Visit the school together. Let them play on the playground, walk through the classroom, and meet new teachers.
- Go on a school shopping trip for a backpack and supplies. Assign a school prep area at home for supplies and lunchboxes.
- Tuck a small family picture in a backpack or lunch.
- Set bedtime and wake-up routines 4 weeks before school starts.
- Be positive and excited for the new school year.

Elementary and middle-school children will need to adjust to new beginnings.

- Expect that your child may want trendy or "cool" school supplies.
- Take a quick trip to school before classes start to help find classrooms, lockers, the cafeteria, and the bus drop-off location.
- Right from the start, help your child get and stay organized. Choose places to store their backpack and a distraction-free area to complete homework.
- Talk to your child about high-risk behaviors, such as drinking, drug use, and sexual activity. Have this talk early and often.
- Encourage your child to choose to take part in at least one school club, sport, or other activity outside of school hours.
- Don't hesitate to make an appointment with the school counselor right away if you have concerns about how your child is adjusting to school. Keep the lines of communication open.

High schoolers need and thrive on positive reinforcement.

- Help your teen set realistic goals on how to earn the best grades and complete assignments.
- Stay organized. Buy a daily planner and teach your teen how to use it correctly or teach them how to organize their schedule with a tablet computer or laptop.
- Encourage your teen to get involved in at least one extracurricular activity or sport because it will help them meet people.
- Continue to support and encourage good study habits with regular homework/study times. Search for ways to offer positive support.
- Ask about what's going on in your child's life. (Use open-ended questions, rather than those that require only a "yes" or "no" response). Be an active listener without judging your child.
- Stay involved in your child's school life and you will know what is going on, and how they are doing.

