

Getting Ready for Daycare & School

Tips from Vivvi's Head of Learning, Lynne Mueller

Beginning daycare or preschool is a major milestone in a young child's life. Leaving the comforting rituals of life at home for a new set of people and rules can be challenging for some children. That's why it's important to treat going to school as a **process** rather than just a date on your calendar. Here are some tips to help your child begin this journey with enthusiasm and motivation so they develop a positive attitude about school now and continue feeling good about school in the years to come.

First Day of School Countdown

Four weeks before school starts

Gradually adjust your child's bedtime. Move it five to 15 minutes earlier every night, until you've reached their ideal bedtime for the school year. Everyone in the household should also adjust theirs gradually, so your child's circadian rhythms reset. This is more effective than making a sudden and shocking change a day or two before school starts. If you approach a new school routine gently, it will feel normal by the time the first day of school rolls around—and bring smiles for those first-day-of-school pictures!

Two weeks before school starts

Begin to start talking about school. Since children have a different perception of time than adults it is recommended not to start these conversations too early. Without a foundation of time, saying "next month" you are going to be going to school can cause a child anxiety since they don't understand what that means in real time. When you start to talk about school you can:

- Use literature to begin the conversation. Each day read some books about school and be ready to answer questions and calm any fears. [Here](#) are some of our favorite titles that help address this topic.
- Go shopping for a new backpack and lunch box.

One week before school starts



Start to talk about school with your child by:

- In a cheerful matter of fact voice, you can say “ next week you will be going to school to play with [Mention a toy your child especially likes, i.e. “dolls. I wonder what kinds of dolls are in school. We will find out next week.”]
- Post a calendar and each day with your child mark off the day and count how many more days until school starts.
- Take a walk by the school and talk about your child’s teachers by name and don’t forget to take a picture to celebrate this special day.
- If your school has sent home a picture of your child’s teacher, post the photo at your child’s eye level in a visible place in your home.
- Have your child create a “first day gift” for their teachers such as a drawing or card.

Night before school:

- If your child is an infant, prepare everything you need to take with you to school so you don’t have to scramble in the morning.
- Get their clothes ready the night before. If your child is interested, get them involved with the clothing selection. Remember, dress them in everyday clothes so they will be comfortable and you should anticipate your child coming home with paint or glue on their clothes- so don’t dress your child in fancy clothes. If they come home messy that means they had a great day!
- If your child will be taking lunch, prepare the lunch with your child and put it in their lunchbox (it can be fun to put a little surprise in the box for them like a smiley face, a silly picture or a note to bring a smile to their face)
- Make sure to use your established routines before bedtime- don’t do anything different so your child will get a good night’s sleep.

First Day of School

Start the first day of school in a relaxed manner by:

- Giving them a good breakfast
- Staying calm on the outside. If you have first day school jitters, you might have your partner or trusted caregiver take your child to school during the first few days until your child has settled in.
- If your child has a security item like a blanket or small stuffed animal- don’t forget to take it if they are allowed to bring it to school. This could make the transition to leaving you a bit easier.



- Begin a good-bye ritual. You might give them something to hold of yours until you get back, do a silly hand good bye movement. Children thrive on consistency so whatever you do or say the first day, try to do on the following days.
- Try saying something [like this](#) when you're saying goodbye.

First week of school

Some children are able to transition to school with ease the first day or two and then when they realize that school is not a novelty activity, they can regress and decide they don't want to go. To support your child you can:

- Speak to your child's teachers to see how your child is once in school. Resistance to school can just be your child trying to be in control. Often, once a child begins the day, the sadness stops.
- Try to be available if the school asks you to come to get your child earlier.
- Always, be on time to pick up your child. It can trigger anxiety if a child is uncertain when they'll be picked up.

