



10 TIPS

TO HELP YOUR CHILD GET A GREAT START IN SCHOOL THIS FALL

From The Greatest 8™

Whether your child is just starting school for the first time or returning for another year, the start of the new school year can be both exciting and stressful for young children and their parents/ caregivers. To help make this transition easier, here are some tips.



HELP YOUR CHILD MASTER THE GREATEST 8™ FOR A LIFETIME OF MENTAL WELLNESS.

	Communication Knowing how to communicate their thoughts and feelings with others helps children do well both socially and academically
	Identifying & Understanding Feelings Being able to recognize their emotions, as well as the emotions of others around them, helps improve children's communication skills
	Balancing Emotions Managing strong emotions is critical to helping children learn how to face challenging situations throughout their lives
	Self-Perceived Competence Having a sense of competence motivates children to be confident and willing to take on new challenges/activities without needing others to make it easier for them
	Problem-Solving Solving problems independently leads children to have better grades in school, as well as increased autonomy and self-confidence
	Coping & Resilience Learning how to cope and bounce back from challenging situations helps children build resilience
	Conflict Management & Resolution Knowing how to manage and resolve conflicts leads to many benefits for children - stronger relationships, self-confidence, and empathy
	Diversity Awareness & Respect Encouraging curiosity & exposing children to different foods, cultures & activities helps children develop respect and appreciation for others

Research shows these 8 skills are linked to:

- » Higher academic achievement – fewer struggles with reading/writing
- » Increased independence and confidence
- » Increased empathy and openness/acceptance
- » Improved mental health and resilience

Developed in partnership with researchers from the University of Rhode Island Psychology Department, The Greatest 8™ provides tips and activities to help parents/caregivers build these 8 core skills in their everyday interactions with young children ages 0-8.



TIP 1

ASSURE YOUR CHILD BEGINS EACH SCHOOL DAY WELL-RESTED

Work to establish standard sleep routines for a smooth transition back to school

Start moving toward a school-year bedtime (adjust each day by 15 minutes) until your child is headed to bed at the desired time a few days before school starts

Begin moving toward a school-year wake-up time as well

For even younger kids, start reducing the length of mid-day naps and, instead, opt for slightly earlier bedtimes





TIP 2



START TALKING WITH YOUR KIDS ABOUT STARTING OR RETURNING TO SCHOOL A FEW WEEKS IN ADVANCE

Ask them about what they're looking forward to the most

Ask them if there is anything that they are feeling nervous about

Strategize about how to manage things that feel concerning. Acknowledge that sometimes the "unknown" can feel scary - but also exciting! What if the worst doesn't happen... but the BEST happens?!!

What are you looking forward to the most?

What if the worst doesn't happen. ...but the BEST happens?



TIP 3



INVOLVE YOUR KIDS IN BACK-TO-SCHOOL PREPARATIONS

Build their sense of responsibility and ownership by having your children:

Pick out their first-day of school clothes/outfits

Choose the back-to-school supplies they need
(let them pick out their own lunch boxes, pencils, erasers, folders, oh my!)

Decorate folders, binders or pencil holders with stickers or other personalized touches!

Pack their backpack with their school supplies





TIP 4 |

WRITE AN “ALL ABOUT ME” LETTER (WITH YOUR CHILD) TO THEIR NEW TEACHER

Include things that they love about school

Things that they love about home

Something exciting that they did over the summer

Something that they read recently

Something that they’re really great at

The names of pets, siblings, etc.

Something important that they want their teacher
to know about them





TIP 5



DO A PRACTICE RUN

Consider driving to/past the school a few times before the first day

Pull into the parking lot or drive through a “drop off” location to show your kiddo where they’ll go and what they’ll do. You can even have them practice getting out of the car and running to touch the door of the building!

Play on the playground
(test out the playground equipment!)

TIP 6



PRACTICE DOING THINGS INDEPENDENTLY

For younger kids, doing things independently might mean practicing opening lunch/snack containers, using bathroom stalls independently (how to lock and unlock doors), working through the anxiety that comes from loud-flushing toilets, practicing zips/buttons/snaps on pants, coats and backpacks!



TIP 7



MAKE A PLAN FOR RIDING THE BUS

Taking the bus (for the first time ever, or just for the first time of the year) can be nerve-wracking. Visiting the bus stop prior to the first day can offset some of your child's nerves. Talk with your child about who will walk them there, and who will meet them when they get off the bus. This will help get rid of some of your child's 'what ifs'

Talk to your kids about how they are feeling and brainstorm some of the *fun* things that happen on the bus (extra time with their friends, sometimes the bus-drivers put on the radio, playing games with your seat-mate)!

Whatever plan you make regarding the bus, stick with it. Having a clear routine and a structured schedule will help make taking the bus less stressful for everyone!





TIP 8



HAVE YOUR KIDS CREATE A SCHOOL-DAY CHECKLIST

Spend time with your kids thinking through all of the things that they need to do at night before going to bed and in the morning when they wake up in order to be ready for school. Items may include: pack lunch, brush teeth, pick out tomorrow's outfit, etc. You can help add to the list, but learning how to make (and follow!) "to do" lists can be really helpful as kids start to get a little older.

Practice using the "to do" list a few days ahead of the start of school. Help your kids learn how to check off tasks that have been done and identify tasks that still need to be completed!





TIP 9



WHAT TIME IS IT? IT'S TIME FOR LUNCH!

Assure lunch time is enjoyable and nutritious by working with your child to:

Meal-plan for lunches

Talk with your kids about the foods that they want to/ will eat at school, the days when they will (or won't) get lunch in the cafeteria (vs. bring it from home), and make a grocery list of tasty lunch items to get before school starts!

Go grocery shopping together and stock up on snacks and other healthy lunch options.

Time your lunches

Kids do not have a lot of time to eat during the school day once they are in elementary school. Sometimes as few as 10 minutes; rarely more than 20 minutes. Practice having your child sit down and focus on eating their lunch within 20 minutes.

Talk about the importance of staying hydrated and eating a good meal to keep their brains and bodies ready for learning throughout the day! Talk about some of the distractions (Friends! Noisy cafeterias!) that might make it difficult to focus on eating.





TIP 10



START PRACTICING MATH-FACTS AND READING AS THE SCHOOL YEAR STARTS TO GET CLOSER

The “summer slide” can be tough for older kids, as they often lose skills learned during the school year. To help them stay sharp, consider using worksheets—purchased, printed, or homemade—to practice math facts, spelling, and other basics. You can even turn review time into a game by quizzing each other at dinner or in the car.

Make learning fun with math and movement games using dice or cards—compare numbers (bigger or smaller), solve quick equations, round to the nearest 5 or 10, sort odd and even or link numbers to actions like jumps, spins, or squats. These playful activities keep kids engaged while reinforcing important skills.

Back-to-School themed books

- » Pout Pout Fish Goes to School by Deborah Diesen
- » Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes
- » I Am Smart, I Am Blessed, I Can Do Anything by Alissa Holder
- » Lola Goes to School by Anna McQuinn
- » It's Okay to Make Mistakes by Todd Parr
- » When I Miss You by Cornelia Spellman
- » All Are Welcome by Alexandra Penfold
- » Bye Bye Time/Momento de la despedida by Elizabeth Verdick



For more information, about The Greatest 8™, go to www.TheGreatest8.org. To receive free TIPS & ACTIVITIES to teach your kids (Ages 0-8) important mental wellness skills TEXT GREATEST8 to 401 297 3020. Weekly texts are matched with children's ages, so subscribers receive age-appropriate information. (Available in both English & Spanish)



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