



How to prepare your child for the first day of preschool

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SPHINGOMYELIN IN MILK

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Children may be nervous, scared, or suffer from separation anxiety on their first day of preschool. Avoid getting frustrated or scolding them, and prepare them with what to expect on their first day.

Most children will experience separation anxiety when they start school.

Going to preschool is a big step for children. They might be excited about preschool activities such as playing with other kids, but they'll also have to accept the change that comes with leaving you or their caregiver behind for a while. For a little one barely out of their diapers, this can be a super-scary thought!

Parents will also have to adjust to this transition, and learn to deal with emotions like separation anxiety.

With the right preparation for both parents and kids, this period might not be as stressful for either as you'd think. Whether the little one is attending for just a couple of days a week or going every weekday, you can do a few things to make preparing for preschool an easy transition.

Talk to your child about school

Start by explaining what will happen when they're at preschool. For example, mention some activities they like to do - such as playing with blocks - and tell them that they'll be able to do this at preschool so they'll look forward to it.

Don't push the conversation if they don't seem interested, as you don't want to look as if you're forcing them to go. You can also do some role-playing at home, with you as the teacher and your child the student. Go through some typical preschool activities so they know how to react.¹

Also, use positive language when talking about preschool. Say things like, "how exciting that you're going to start preschool" or "isn't it great that you'll get to do (an activity they enjoy) at preschool".

Also, use positive language when talking about preschool. Say things like, "how exciting that you're going to start preschool" or "isn't it great that you'll get to do (an activity they enjoy) at preschool". And teach them basic rules such as raising their hand for permission to speak in class. Make sure you're not anxious when you talk about preschool as your child will be able to pick up on it.²

Visit the school

Drop by the preschool before the first day and take your child with you. While it's important for you to ensure that the school lives up to your educational and safety standards, it's also crucial for your child to get a feel of things.

Go during school hours so that they can see what happens and better visualise what it'll be like for them.³

Introduce your child to their teacher during the visit, if possible. While on your school tour, point out things they'll be able to do once they start preschool. For example, take them to the play area, show them the bookshelf where the books for storytime will come from, and tell them where they'll be having their meals or snacks.

Get them involved

It's their first day at school, so let them make the decisions for their school supplies. Let them pick their backpack, water bottle and stationery. This way, your child feels more involved in the process and will feel more geared up for the big day. Don't forget to teach them how to open and close their backpacks and lunchboxes so they'll be independent in school!

Boost Their Immune System

There's a high chance your child will get sick more often once they're exposed to other children, as kids often incubate infections and viruses that they won't tell others about. So ensure that your child gets the proper nutrition and hygiene habits instilled in them before they start school.

You can give them the edge they need, by feeding them foods or formula milk that's high in prebiotics, zinc, folate, protein, iron, vitamin D, Docosahexanoic acid (DHA) and Sphingomyelin. These foods boost your child's immune system, and also help with their cognitive and brain development.⁴

Hygiene is important too, so teach your child how to wash their hands the right way to reduce the chances of bacteria and viruses spreading to them.

Start the day right

On the day itself, wake your child up early and have breakfast with them without rushing. Go through the morning routine without getting stressed so that your child is calm too. If your child doesn't need to wear a uniform, get them to pick out their clothes for school. This way, they're more comfortable in their outfit and will feel more confident too.

If your child is nervous, let them take their favourite comfort object with them to preschool (check with the school beforehand if this is okay). Knowing their favourite stuffed animal is in their backpack could help to calm their nerves.

Arrive at preschool early. And when you're leaving, say a quick goodbye and stay calm. The longer you linger on goodbyes, the harder it'll be for yourself and your child to get through the day. And let them know when you'll be back to pick them up so they have the assurance that mum or dad will be back to get them in no time.⁵

Prepare for separation anxiety

This applies to yourself and your child. Most children will experience separation anxiety when they start school and how long this lasts depends on their personality. You should lead by example and stay calm. Keep your tone upbeat and show confidence in the school so your child will pick up on your positive vibes. Keep this up even if your child is crying when you drop them off.⁶

It's hard to ignore their tears, but getting frustrated or scolding them will only make it worse. Trust the preschool teachers to handle your child once you leave and speak with them before school starts if you think your child will find it hard to be left alone in preschool.

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