

First Day of School and Transitions – Helpful Hints

The first day of school is an exciting time for preschoolers and parents alike. You may have been preparing and talking about the specific day for the past several weeks and feel like everything will go smoothly. Or maybe not. Preschoolers have a lot of questions and concerns about starting school. What will the teachers be like? Who will play with them or take care of them if they have a problem? When will mommy and daddy be back to pick me up?

Don't worry, we've prepared some helpful suggestions for parents of preschoolers and kindergarten age children, whether your child is a returning student or is coming to Sunrise for the very first time.

Don't rush through the morning.

No one likes to race through the school morning routine - especially on the first day. Plan to get everyone up at a reasonable hour. Eat a nutritious breakfast.

Ask your child to select his/her clothes the night before and encourage him/her to help plan and pack lunch (if applicable). Not only will this help to develop a routine during the school year, but it will show your child that he/she is growing up and will encourage him/her to make decisions.

Put on a happy face.

Anxiety may be eating you up inside, but don't let on — nerves are highly contagious. If your tone is upbeat and you seem confident that your child will have a good time, there's a better chance that he or she will be upbeat, too.

Keep good-byes short and sweet.

When it's your cue to make an exit, hold back your tears a little longer (smiling is the best approach), give your preschooler a hug or blow him/her a goodbye kiss, and let him/her know you'll be back ("I'll pick you up after lunch"). Then head out - don't linger (children can't get on with the day until you do).

Consistency is key when it comes to making preschool a part of your child's new routine. And no matter how tempting, never sneak out when your preschooler is looking the other way. It'll make him/her feel insecure and less trusting.

Just remember, it's normal for kids to occasionally have a meltdown when it's time to separate. Even if your child is crying and clinging onto you, chances are he/she will be fine five minutes after you leave. If it's taking a while for your little one to adjust, don't panic - preschool teachers have seen it all, and they know just what to do. And don't be surprised if your child is too happy or busy to say hello to you (or talk about his/her day) once dismissal time rolls around!

Prepare a Comfort Object

Have your child bring a little reminder of home to school to ease separation anxiety and reassure him/her. If he/she doesn't have a favorite stuffie or blankie, even a beloved book can do the trick. Comfort objects may seem like small stuff to you, but they can provide a real sense of security to kids in an unfamiliar environment.