



SPARK TUTORS

TOP TIPS FOR HEADING BACK TO SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

Heading back to school is both an exciting and stressful time for most students and their families—“exciting” because students will get to see their friends and resume school year activities; “stressful” because summer break is over and it’s back to homework, studying, and more rigid schedules.

As families make the transition back to school, here are a few useful tips you can use to make the process go more smoothly.

Start the Back-to-School Transition Early

Ideally, families start preparing for the return to school at least two weeks before classes begin. This includes everything from no more late hours on what will soon be school nights to resuming early morning wake up times. The idea is to get back in the school year “groove” well before school actually starts so your child is mentally and physically prepared. We know school starts for many in just a few days, but it’s never too late to be thinking about things like bedtimes, schedules, and school supplies if you haven’t done so already.



Gear Up

Hopefully you were able to avoid the mid-august back to school frenzy! Don't worry if you haven't gotten all your child's school supplies yet, or if the first days of school present you with a few items you didn't anticipate needing. Most school supplies can be purchased easily on Amazon or at your local Staples.

Design a School Day Routine

Most educators agree that children feel more confident and secure when their daily activities are predictable and familiar. It lowers stress and makes them more productive learners. With that in mind, as part of your transition back to school, begin by planning what a typical school day will look like. Involve your child in the process so he or she has buy-in.

When is wake up time? When does school start? How will your child get there? What happens after school, such as a babysitter, after school activity, staying at a friend's house, coming straight home, or an after-school job? When is study and homework time each day (maybe it's 4:00-4:20 pm for math homework; 4:20-4:40 pm for social studies, and so on)? When is social/entertainment time?

Talk with Your Child About Any Concerns

Children are often stressed when it's time to go back to school, especially if they're moving up to middle school or high school. From their perspective, the prospect of a new school, new classes, new teachers, and new classmates can be scary. This year, with many children physically returning to school for the first time in more than a year because of the pandemic, they're likely to have even more jitters and concerns. Talk to them about mask wearing, social distancing, and any other safety protocols your school has in place. Talk to them about other concerns they might have. The simple act of talking and letting your child be heard often soothes fears and makes the return to school a more positive experience.

Discuss the Upcoming School Year

Before classes begin represents a great time to talk with your child about the new school year in general, including topics such as schoolwork, sports, extracurricular activities, socializing, and academic performance. Talk about what support might be available if your child needs help or gets overwhelmed juggling sports and social activities with schoolwork. How available will you be to help with homework? Is arranging a tutor or academic coach a possibility? How much extracurricular activities is too much? Discussing options and planning before school resumes can help take the pressure off the entire family.

Dedicate Student Study Space

Dedicate space in the home that your child knows is his or her place to do schoolwork or to study. The ideal space is someplace that's quiet, organized, ergonomic, and that provides room for spreading out and arranging materials. Spots in the home might include a desk in your child's room (not the bed!) or space in a home office, dining room, or other nook, so long as it's distraction free.



Get Good Sleep

It can be tough for children to get good sleep the night before the start of the new school year. They're excited, anxious, and they've probably gotten used to staying up a little later than usual during the summer months. That said, getting good sleep is a critical year-round need, and especially during the school year. Well-rested students are more alert in class, and they pay better attention. Of course, getting your youngsters (6 to 12) to sleep the recommended 10 to 12 hours of sleep each night, or your teen to get 8 or 9 hours, is easier said than done!

Curb Late Night Screen Usage

While staying up late is normal for teens, having a "no screens" policy past a certain time (10:00 pm, for example) is a fantastic idea. Smartphones, tablets, and video

games may be a great for passing the time, but the blue light emitted by the screens of many electronic devices can interfere with sleep—plus tech-based activities tend to rev us up, making sleep even more elusive. We know most teens probably won't be going to bed at 10pm, so these screenless hours will enable them to wind down for the night. They can always listen to music or read until they are ready for bed!

Check-in to See How the Return to School is Going

The first few days and weeks of the new school year are often the most critical to make sure your child gets off on the right foot. Ask your child how the first day went (and one-word answers like "OK" or "Great" don't count). Prod your child for details. Talk about what your child liked or didn't like. What did he or

she find surprising? Make a copy of any syllabuses or other class materials so you have backup in case your child loses them. Ask your child if there are any supplies he or she needs. Make this kind of check-in a regular fixture in your household during the school year, at least weekly so you can keep track of progress (or lack thereof) and whatever else may be going on at school.

We Can Help!

Spark Tutors helps students create the kinds of homework and study habits they need to do well at any time during the school year. We work regularly with students and their families to ease students back to school and keep them on track so they become engaged, productive learners. Contact Spark Tutors today.