

10 WAYS TO PREPARE YOUR KINDERGARTENER

By: Stacey Kaye Hinman

BUILD TRUST
AND ROUTINE
TO REDUCE
JITTERS



THIS FALL a new group of five- and six-year-olds will embark on the first significant milestone of their educational journey—kindergarten. Whether you've been through years of preschool or not, the transition into “big kid school” can cause parents and children alike some first-day anxiety.

To help ease the transition to independence, Dr. Mary Zurn, vice president of early childhood education at Primrose Schools, suggests several ways parents can prepare their little ones before school starts.

HERE ARE 10 TIPS TO HELP CALM KINDERGARTEN JITTERS:

1 ESTABLISH A DAILY routine that fits your family's schedule and ask everyone to do his or her best to stick to it. Begin morning activities at the same time every day. Start at least two weeks before the first day and continue the routine throughout the year.

2 NIGHT-TIME ROUTINES are important too. The whole family can help make mornings easier by taking care of tasks the night before. Pack book bags, complete homework and pick out the next day's clothes in the evening to avoid morning mayhem.

3 GET YOUR REST. Read a bedtime story early enough in the evening for children to get a good night's sleep. Many morning issues can be avoided if everyone is rested and ready to begin the day.

4 READ, READ, AND READ some more. It's often the anticipation of the unknown that makes children anxious about kindergarten. Reading about starting school allows children to imagine their own experience and express their fears. The following books are fun to read and can help children prepare:

- *When Mommy and Daddy Go to Work* by Joanna Cole
- *First Day* by Joan Rankin
- *The Babysitter Sings* by Phillis Gershtator
- *Don't Go* by Jane Breskin Zalben

5 PREPARE YOUR kindergartener for longer periods of separation in increments. Before leaving your child at school for the first time, have him or her stay with a grandparent or a babysitter for increasingly longer periods of time. This will teach your child to trust that you will always return.

6 TOUR THE SCHOOL with your child. Visit the classroom, meet the teacher and tour the playground so the places and faces they will see on the first day feel familiar and safe. Talk about what both of you saw and how fun the different activities looked. Refer to the teacher by name to help your child think of her as a person you know and trust.

7 SET THE STAGE. Talk to your child about kindergarten and help him or her visualize what the day's activities are likely to be. “On Monday when you go to school, you will see your friends, play on the swings, and read stories. Ms. Smith will be there to help you.

It will be a great day! And Mommy or Daddy will be there to take you home when school is over for the day.”

8 SHOP FOR SCHOOL supplies. Give your child the opportunity to pick out a few items he or she likes to provide a sense of ownership and responsibility in the decision-making process.

9 SAY A QUICK “GOODBYE” and promise to come back. Give a quick hug and kiss, cheerfully say goodbye and promise to return later. The longer you stay the less confidence your child will have in being “left” at school.

10 ESTABLISH A PARTNERSHIP with your child's teacher. The more comfortable you are with your child's teacher, the more comfortable your child will be. The more visible the connection between home and school the more secure your child will feel.

With these tips in mind, sit down with your family well before the first day of school, figure out which ideas will work best for you and your child, and start a plan for a stress-free start to kindergarten. 📖

Stacey Kaye Hinman is the owner of Primrose School of Lake Norman, which is currently preparing for another great school year. For more tips and ideas from Dr. Mary Zurn, visit www.DrZandMe.com or www.PrimroseSchools.com, or visit Stacey at Primrose School of Lake Norman at 173 Raceway Drive in Mooresville, call her at 704-658-0460 or email shinman@primroselakenorman.com.

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