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Back to School Basics

Summer is heading toward a close, and a new school year is right around the corner. I remember those days filled with both excitement and stress—walking into stores and being greeted by rows of school supplies. There’s something about the smell of fresh notebooks and pencils that would get my heart pumping. I’d wonder who my teacher would be and what I’d get to learn in the coming year.

As a parent, back-to-school time brought a different mix of emotions—a bit of sadness that another year of my kids being little was slipping by, and of course, the dread of getting back into a school-year routine.

Here are a few tips to help ease the transition:

Routine

Start practicing a school-year routine a couple of weeks before classes begin. If your family has drifted from regular bedtimes, now is a great time to get back on track. Establish a bedtime routine that fits your child’s age and works for your family. Encourage screen-free time before bed, as blue light from devices can affect both the quality and quantity of sleep. Also, practice waking up at the time needed for school to help mornings go more smoothly.

Calendar

Use a calendar to keep track of everyone’s schedules—practices, activities, appointments, and projects. Getting organized doesn’t have to be overwhelming. I have a friend who swears by a phone app to stay on top of things. Personally, I prefer a paper calendar so I can see the week or month at a glance. At home, a paper or dry-erase calendar in a visible spot can help the whole family stay on the same page. Keeping track of commitments can reduce stress and prevent scheduling conflicts.

Communication

Start the year off right by practicing open communication.

Here’s an idea: Set aside time for a family meeting—maybe over some ice cream—and talk about everyone’s hopes, dreams, goals, or concerns for the new school year. Creating a space to share expectations and worries now can help build a safe environment for future conversations when challenges arise.

Jumping into a new school year brings a mix of emotions for everyone in the family. But by approaching it as a team and being proactive, you can help create a positive and supportive experience for all.

About the Author

[Sara Attig](#) is a Family Life Educator with University of Illinois Extension, serving Livingston, McLean, and Woodford Counties. Attig uses her expertise to deliver impactful and meaningful programs about the dimensions of wellness, aging, and much more to Livingston, McLean, and Woodford Counties and beyond.