



Children's Day Preschool & Family Center

## Easing Into the New School Year

The Back-to-School season can fill many parents and children with a wide variety of feelings. From joy and excitement to worry and anxiety – especially for those entering preschool for the first time! Preschool allows children to be with peers and learn life lessons such as how to share, take turns, and follow the rules. It can also prepare them academically for kindergarten and beyond. However, going to preschool does come with some emotions for both the parent and the child. For a child, being in a new preschool environment with unfamiliar teachers and kids can cause both anxiety and excitement. Parents might have mixed emotions about whether their child is ready for preschool.

For many families, enrolling their child in a daycare/preschool is essential for families to work. For others, it's not a necessity, but it is an important step in their child's development. Preschool has many benefits - it allows young children to experience a more diverse environment and gain opportunities to socialize with peers. There are many reasons for enrolling a child in preschool, but the hardest task is transitioning a child from being at home to entering a new environment like preschool.

Here are some tips parents can use to prepare their child for preschool:

### Create A Goodbye Ritual

Many parents are not ready for how difficult the transition can be for children. Goodbye routines provide comfort and familiarity for your child to know what to expect. This could be anything you and your child decide on, such as a special hug or handshake followed by a "See you later, alligator!" Once you've said your goodbyes, it's best to leave so your child does not become preoccupied with your presence. A long goodbye might only reinforce a child's sense that a preschool is a "bad" place.



### Visit the school

If possible, ask your school for a tour before the school year starts. Take advantage of any offer your school makes to visit- this helps you become aware of the environment your child will be in. It can help you understand what to expect and will make it easier to



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prepare your child before the first day. Whenever passing by the school, casually point it out to your child, and talk about how they will soon be going there to learn and make new friends. This simple tactic will make them aware of the school and will help the child feel familiar with the school as a safe space.

### Bring a piece of home

An exercise that we practice here at Children's Day Preschool is to ask parents to bring in a family photo or two. Photos are hung on the wall, or the teachers create a special photo album so that children can feel more at home seeing family pictures around the classroom. It helps all of the children feel like they are part of a big family. It can also help remind children that they will be going home with their families at the end of the day.

### Mimic preschool routines

As school comes near, you can practice some preschool daily routines with your child to get them accustomed to a typical day in school. One example would be adjusting your child's nap time at home to match what it is during the school day. Mimicking a schedule similar to the one the school uses will make your child familiar and comfortable with the day's activities - whether they are at home or school.

### Give them a walkthrough of the day

Having a conversation with your child before school starts can ease any worries, they may have about being in a new setting. If you give them a quick run-through of what they can expect- such as "When you're in school you'll play with your friends, eat lunch, and have a nap. Then I'll pick you up after naptime is over!" Many children are curious when it comes to new surroundings and can express that feeling in different ways. Providing some information, like their daily routine, can help them adjust to these changes.

Here are some of the following tips parents can take to prepare themselves to adjust to these changes:

### Get to know the teacher beforehand

Having parents meet our teachers before the first day of school can give them some reassurance about the care they will be receiving. If your school doesn't offer this opportunity, reach out to see if you can connect directly with your child's teacher. You can also ask how the teacher handles the first tear-filled days. How will the first week be structured to make the change easier for your child? Getting answers to the many questions you might have can aid you in preparing your child for the first few days of school.



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## Resist picking them up early/surprise visits

Although this may be the first time for many parents to be away from their child for a long period of time, after the first day or two of school, we do not recommend taking your child out of class early or making frequent surprise visits. Once you've left your child, resist the temptation to go back and check on them, and try not to phone the school every hour. Children might come to expect an early pick-up which increases the risk of anxious feelings when you don't pick them up early. Or they can spend their day constantly asking for you and waiting for your surprise arrival.

## Remind yourself of the advantages an early childhood program will provide to your child

Parents may see their child's tears and challenges with transition and immediately decide to pull them out of school. But that's a bad idea: It denies the child an opportunity to learn how to work through negative feelings and sets a precedent of not having to face problems. We discourage parents from removing their child from school unless there is an emergency or other circumstances that cannot be avoided.

## Talk to your child about preschool before their first day

Going to preschool brings lots of emotions- excitement, worry, nervousness, happiness- for children and adults! Talking with your child before the first day of school- and throughout the first month of school- can help ease both of your worries. In the months and weeks before school, gradually introduce your child to activities that may take place in their classroom. For example, a child who is used to building with blocks at home will find it comforting to know that there are building materials in their classroom.





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Even for seasoned preschool parents, the transition back to school can be more complicated than a parent might imagine. The night before a child's first day back, despite being super excited, can also be super stressful.

As you embark on this important step your child is taking, don't focus too much on the changes it brings. This could make any anxiety worse, and even young kids can pick up on their parents' nonverbal cues. So, while you might feel a little worried or guilty about leaving your child at preschool, be enthusiastic and talk about how fun it will be. Fortunately, most kids are quite resilient. They'll be happy to be back at school, making or seeing friends and playing outside.

By providing thoughtful attention and support, we can help them adjust, adapt and successfully cope with the current and ongoing challenges they face.