

12-Step Checklist for Back to School

Please note that these are suggested steps, and you may not need to take all of the steps listed below.

One week before school:

1. Start your School Sleep Routine

Routines can be relaxed in the summer, so a week prior to school is a good time to adjust the family schedule to get everyone back into morning and bedtime habits.

- Establish bed times for the school year and start following them
- Ensure the entire family is up when they would be for school
- For older children, give them their own alarm clock and let them practice using it
- Ensure that the entire family get involved so that your child doesn't feel alone with these changes

2. Promote Healthy Eating Habits

Nutrition is extremely important; it's hard to cope well when you are tired or hungry, so provide your child nutritious and frequent snacks and build in regular routines.

- Start having your meals around regular mealtimes
- Ask your child to help you create a school lunch menu for the first week of school
- Allow your child to pick out his or her favourite snacks
- Allow your child to help you plan your dinner meals -this way s(he) will have a yummy dinner to look forward to

3. Shop for Supplies

Make picking out school supplies a fun task!

- Create a list of school supplies with your child
- Plan a fun shopping trip to pick out supplies

4. Encourage Your Child to Share His or Her Fears

Talk to your child about his or her worries and practice coping skills

- Touch base with your child at a regular time each day to discuss your child's worries and encourage him or her to problem solve and plan
- Role-play with your child
- Focus on the positive aspects – ask your child to list the three things that s(he)is most excited about on the first day
- Practice [calm breathing with your child](#) – s(he) can learn to use this when her anxiety rises
- [Develop cognitive coping cards](#) that your child can use to help cope with anxiety

A couple of days before school:

5. Do a dry-run

- Go to school several times – walking, driving, or taking the bus
- For young children, describe and draw out the route and include how long it will take
- For younger children, go to the schoolyard and play a few times before the first day of school

6. Tour the School

- For new students, take a tour of the school
- Show your child the classrooms, the cafeteria, and the bathrooms
- Meet your child's teacher with your child present, if possible

7. Plan the Outfits

- Ask your child to help choose the outfits for the first week of school
- Let your child pick out his or her favorite outfit for the first day

8. Pack the Backpack

- Together with your child, pack the backpack the night before, including treats

9. Choose a Special Object

- For younger children who are nervous about separating, suggest taking a special object to school that reminds him or her of home
- Put a reassuring note in a child's lunch can also help ease separation anxiety

The first day of school:

10. Walk with a Friend

- Try and arrange that your child walks with a friend to school for the first couple of days
- Arrange play days with school mates leading up to the first day

11. Talk to the Teacher

- Let the teacher know that your child is having some separation anxiety

12. Praise and Reward

- Most importantly, praise and reward your child for brave behavior!**

If you would like additional resources to help you ease your child back to school, please visit the following links for more information.

- [Helping your Child Cope with Back to School Anxiety](#) - How to Deal with Back-to-School Worries
- [Making Sleep Count](#) - Facts, behaviours that help with sleep, things that interfere with sleep, and ideas for helpful self-talk around slumber
- [My Anxiety Plan for Children](#) - A free online anxiety management toolkit and step-by-step guide for parents of children with anxiety
- [AnxietyBC Youth Site](#)
- [Mindshift App](#)
- [Separation Anxiety During the First Days of Kindergarten](#)