Every year kids struggle with the thought of leaving the long, leisurely, fun-filled summer days behind and returning to classrooms, textbooks, teachers and tests in the fall.

Parents can help make the transition from summertime fun to schoolroom studies much smoother if they start to prepare their children before school classes begin.

The start of school won't be such a shock for children if parents help their kids get in the right mind-set for school well before the first day of classes. Simple steps parents can take to help kids get prepared include the following:

**Early to rise:** Get children back on the same sleep schedule they will have when they are in school. Then it won't be such a struggle to get them out of bed the first couple of weeks of school.

**Share the preparation:** Take children with you when shopping for school supplies and clothes
so they feel more involved in the process.

• **Keep busy**: Add more structured activities to your children's days so they are prepared to be on a schedule when they are back in the classroom.

• **Take a tour**: If your child is starting at a new building or another school district, go to the playground on school grounds or take a tour of the new facility before classes begin so that the new building won't seem so unfamiliar and scary.

• **Provide consistency**: Avoid adding to your child's stress if he or she is nervous about starting school. Don't change jobs, move, or make a major lifestyle change right before school begins. Keep things constant at home, if possible.

• **Talk it out**: If your child seems nervous or intimidated by the thought of going back to school, don't simply dismiss those fears by telling them, "Everything is going to be OK." Talk to your child and together come up with solutions to try and solve the problem.

• **Get outside help**: If your child seems to be having an unusually difficult time or has severe anxieties about the start of school, it may be a good idea to see a mental health professional who specializes in children's issues. The therapist can help both you and your child re-evaluate the situation and pinpoint the problem. With the help of a therapist, you can work toward an appropriate solution.

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