



Back to School Tips for Children with Autism

- 1 Ease into routines** – Start adjusting bedtime, wake-up, and mealtimes 1–2 weeks early to help your child feel more in sync when school starts.
- 2 Show the day visually** – Use a simple visual schedule with pictures or icons to walk through what mornings, school, and afternoons will look like.
- 3 Take a school tour** – If possible, visit the classroom, bathroom, cafeteria, and playground to help your child feel familiar with their new space.
- 4 Practice together** – Role-play common school activities like packing a backpack, raising a hand, or sitting for group time to build comfort and confidence.
- 5 Pack comfort items** – Familiar snacks, comfy clothes, or calming tools like fidgets or headphones can make the day feel safer and more predictable.
- 6 Team up with teachers** – Share your child's strengths, motivators, and communication preferences so staff can offer the right support from day one.
- 7 Celebrate every win** – Whether it's getting out the door, trying something new, or just showing up—you're both doing great.



Flip the page for a checklist to stay organized and help your kiddo feel ready for school!



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Back-to-School Checklist for Children with Autism

Practical steps to support a smooth and confident transition



2–4 Weeks Before School Starts

- ☐ Begin shifting bedtime and wake-up to match school hours
- ☐ Reintroduce structured mealtimes and snacks, if needed
- ☐ Tour the school (if possible): classroom, bathroom, cafeteria, playground
- ☐ Take photos of the school tour to review at home together
- ☐ Meet the teacher or request a virtual intro
- ☐ Create a simple visual schedule of the daily routine
- ☐ Practice school tasks at home (packing a backpack, lining up, sitting at a desk)
- ☐ Check in with your child's BCBA or therapy team to align goals

1 Week Before School Starts

- ☐ Let your child pick out clothing options that are soft, tagless, or sensory-friendly
- ☐ Pack the backpack with familiar items (lunchbox, water bottle, fidgets if needed)
- ☐ Label all supplies and personal items
- ☐ Set up a designated school prep station at home (backpack, shoes, visual schedule)
- ☐ Talk positively about school—focus on what your child enjoys (recess, art, snack)
- ☐ Create or update a brief “About Me” sheet for the teacher (strengths, motivators, communication style)

First Week of School

- ☐ Follow your morning routine with visual support
- ☐ Provide a preferred item in the backpack (comfort object, photo, chewy necklace, etc.)
- ☐ Send a short email or note to the teacher to check in
- ☐ Debrief at the end of each day with a simple “What went well?”
- ☐ Reinforce effort and bravery with praise, rewards, or special activities
- ☐ Log observations: any patterns, wins, or areas to adjust

Ongoing Support

- ☐ Keep open communication with your child's teacher or aides
- ☐ Use a communication notebook or app if your child doesn't share verbally
- ☐ Adjust supports and routines as needed
- ☐ Collaborate with your ABA team to update goals or strategies
- ☐ Celebrate progress—big or small!



Remember that progress is not always linear—but every step forward is a step worth celebrating.



Let us know how we can support you!

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