



Preparing your child for primary school



Starting school can be a daunting time for both children and parents. Here are some tips to help you get prepared for your child's transition.

Get familiar with the school setting

Getting familiar with the school setting and knowing what to expect can reduce worries and feelings of anxiety. You can start by showing your child photos of the school or pictures from the school webpage. You may even be able to find a photo of your child's teacher. Take some time driving or travelling to their new school to help them to become familiar with the setting.

Social stories

Some children find changes to their routine particularly difficult and transitioning to school can be a worrying time for them. If transitions and changes to your child's routine creates feelings of anxiety, consider creating a story to prepare for this event. Information on Social stories are discussed in detail at

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/>

Social stories help to describe an unfamiliar event to a child. A social story can break a large event, that may seem overwhelming, into smaller manageable steps. A social story can also explain what is expected of the child and what behaviours are expected in a situation.

Free social stories or social story templates that relate to starting school can be easily sourced and downloaded online. Examples include: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Social-Story-New-School-802915>

If you prefer, you can also create your own social story. Considering the following points:

- 1) The story is in the present tense and from the child's perspective i.e. in the first person/use 'I'.
- 2) Keep language simple and easy. Describe what to do, feelings that may be felt, what will be experienced.
- 3) Include photos of your child, their school and even their new teacher if possible.

Establishing a morning routine

It's important for morning times to be as relaxed as possible so your child can arrive at school calm and ready for the day. Young children starting school will likely have limited awareness of time and it can be tricky for them to understand how much time it takes to get ready for their school day. It is important that your child establishes a good daily routine for school mornings.



Tip's to help establish a morning routine:

Use a timer (sand timers are great) to help your child become aware of the time they have to complete tasks. Timers also help children to stay focused on a task.

Your child may have limited awareness of the steps involved in getting ready for school. Create a visual schedule with your child of the basic steps included in their morning routine. Include photos or download images of each task. It's important to be consistent in the routine to ensure success and independence.

Encourage eating breakfast at a table away from distractions.

Omit screen time where possible or until all important tasks are complete.

Suggest that school bag is packed the night before and placed by the front door ready to go.

Dressing

- Practice daily dressing tasks in advance of starting Primary School. **Please see self-care resources about dressing**
- Consider what dressing tasks they can do already and what tasks need support. Incorporate those tasks into the routine, so they continue to work on their independence.
- Allow enough time in the morning so dressing isn't rushed.
- Consider which room is best to get dressed in away from distractions such as toys or too much noise.
- Consider adapted clothing to make things easier at school until a skill is learnt. For example velcro shoes, ties on coat zips.
- Label the tags on the school jumper and coat with your child's initials or a symbol. This can help your child to spot it at school.



Getting to school

Work out the best route to school in advance. Practice the route several times to work out how long it takes and to see what time you need to leave the house.

Preparing for participating at lunch time

There can be lots of things to consider when your child first goes to the lunch hall. They may have to sit on a stool or bench without a back rest, the lunch hall can be very noisy, there may be lots of smells and lots of people moving around.

Tips to consider:

- How long will your child take to eat everything? Will they have time to play?
- Consider what foods they enjoy and whether they will be able to manage themselves and not need help.
- Encourage your child to start practicing activities at home such as putting straws in cartons, opening yoghurt pots, crisp packets and carrying a tray.
- Observe your child's ease with opening and closing a lunch box before purchasing. This is something they will need to do at school.
- Choose a water bottle that can be easily managed.
- Encourage your child to go the toilet during lunch break.



- Encourage your child to use a table top mirror at home so they can build awareness and practice wiping their mouth and face after eating.
- Sit at the table for home meals to prepare them for lunch hall at school.
- Practice cutlery skills - **Please see self-care resources about meals**

Preparing for using the toilet at school

Independence with toileting is often achieved by the age a child transitions to Primary school. However, in some cases, it's still being developed. It would be wise to inform the school if independence has not yet been achieved.

The toilets being used in primary schools are typically smaller for children going into primary school, however if your child needs additional supports let the school know in advance.

Please see self-care resources about toileting.

