

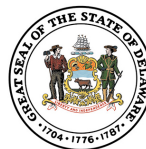
Back to School: Off to a Good Start



The start of the school year is always stressful. In an ever-changing educational landscape, that is the one thing we can count on. Beside the normal back-to-school jitters, this year your children may also be missing friends who have transferred schools, navigating a new school or schedule themselves or even grappling with cumbersome safety protocols. Whatever the situation, getting into a school routine always requires an adjustment, for students and their parents. To help ease the stress and anxiety of the transition, consider the following tips:

- **Prepare in advance.** With many school districts still formulating their instruction plans, it's hard to know what to expect and how daily routines will change. As much as possible, mapping out a schedule and preparing supplies and technology in advance will help you be flexible and respond to any last-minute changes.
- **Get up earlier.** The transition from summer freedom to school year routine can be a rough one. Try starting the new morning routine the week before the first day of school begins to help ease into the year.
- **Arrive early.** Whether walking across the street to the bus stop or driving across town to school, getting a head start on the day will ease stress and help your kids to settle in.
- **Talk about feelings.** Encourage your children to describe how they feel about the new year and try to ease any fears they may have.
- **Express interest, be informed.** Listen to your child's viewpoint, even if it is difficult to hear. Stay informed about school policies so that you can explain your district's decisions and why they may differ from other local schools.

Beginning something new can be stressful and adjustments take a lot of concentration and effort. Remember, how parents handle such transitions can set the stage for how well a child adjusts to his or her own challenges. Help children adapt by making preparations in advance, clearly explaining the changes about to take place and listening empathetically if they express doubts or fears.



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