



School Morning Strategies

Children can find the transition into school in the morning challenging for many reasons. This can often be worsened after a longer period at home, such as weekends, a period of illness or holiday. You can try the following strategies to make this transition less stressful.

At home:

- ✓ Ensure your child is getting enough sleep and has good routines around meals, bedtime, homework, etc. so that school is a predictable part of their routine. Try to reintroduce routines a few days before returning to school from a holiday. It might help to count down on a calendar to the return to school.
- ✓ Promote social contact with school friends outside of school.
- ✓ Have a consistent morning routine. It can help to set this out as a visual checklist so your child can see time passing before school and can anticipate what is coming next.
- ✓ Keep the momentum going in the mornings - avoid long periods of inactivity where the child can get 'stuck' or overly involved in a desired activity (e.g. screen time).
- ✓ Validate and acknowledge your child's feelings - listen calmly and show you understand. Try to find out if there are particular parts of the school day they find hardest and if they have any ideas to improve things.
- ✓ Create a discrete reminder your child can have with them during the day, e.g. drawing a small heart/star on your wrist and theirs, having a small photo they can keep in their bag or identifying a small transition object they can keep in their pocket (please agree any transition objects with school staff so they can be managed sensitively and appropriately in school).
- ✓ Try hard to be on time for school - walking into a classroom where everyone is already settled can be very daunting. Prepare as much as possible the night before.

On the way to school:

- ✓ Talk positively about school. Identify things your child is looking forward to that day (however small). Show your excitement about these things. "I can't wait to hear about...", "Ooh, I'm so jealous you have pizza for lunch today!" etc.
- ✓ Find a way to make the journey fun, e.g. compete to spot the most of a certain item (and report your scores/the winner to your teacher), travel in a novel way such as pretending to ice skate instead of walk, play 'the floor is lava' by jumping from shadow to shadow, race, etc.
- ✓ Remind your child of something they can look forward to at the end of the day (park, game, favourite dinner, favourite TV show, hot chocolate, etc.)
- ✓ Get prepared - ensure your child is holding everything they need to take into school before you get to the gate to make the transition as swift and smooth as possible.

Saying goodbye:

- ✓ Make and practice a goodbye ritual (say/do the same thing every day) - a special handshake, signal or saying, e.g. "see you later alligator" and practice this at home and in other contexts where you leave your child, such as playdates.
- ✓ Remain positive (even if you don't feel it!) - try not to show you are worried or frustrated. Avoid speaking negatively about your child or school with them present (you can hand over any concerns to staff once they have entered school or via phone/email).
- ✓ Once your child is inside the gates, leave the site. The entrances are well-staffed and staying to watch until your child enters the building sends the message that you are anxious, which will increase their anxiety.

No one strategy will work for all children, or even the same child all the time. New strategies often take time to show impact, so it is important to try something consistently over a period of time before dismissing it. If you have questions about these strategies or have implemented them and are not seeing any progress, please speak to your child's class teacher or a member of our Inclusion Team for support.