

ABCs of preparing your kids to go back to school



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Expert advice to make the transition to in-person learning easier on your family.

Going back to school brings all kinds of emotions for kids—and their parents. Everything from joy to nerves and even mixed emotions can be expected as many students are

returning to in-person instruction for the first time in a year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some children will be excited about structure, friends,

and normalcy while others may be afraid of getting sick. With so many unknowns, it's important to keep open communication with your children. Here's expert advice to help you navigate.



ASK YOUR CHILD OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS SUCH AS:

Do you have questions about going back to school?

Are you thinking about anything?

This will open the lines of communication with your child so you can guide the conversation. It's also fine if your children don't have any questions.

BE AGE APPROPRIATE

Respond to your child's concerns in a way they can understand

AGES 5-8

EARLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN:

Provide brief, simple information that balances COVID-19 facts with reassurance adults are there to help keep them safe. If they struggle with wearing masks, help them feel more comfortable with the idea by making it into a fun game by saying, "Your mask gives you superpowers, so you want to make sure to keep it on all the time."

If allowed, put a family photo or a special object in your child's backpack to help keep

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them calm. Create additional family time after school to provide support until your child feels comfortable in their new routine. Practice separating in small ways to build tolerance and more independence.

AGES 9-12 **UPPER ELEMENTARY & EARLY MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN:**

This age group may need help recognizing rumor and fantasy. Discuss how teachers and others in the community are helping prevent germs from spreading.

Practice washing your hands together and applying hand sanitizer, as this will be an even bigger part of their routine.

AGES 13-18 **UPPER MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:**

Provide honest, accurate facts about COVID-19 in your area. Let them help make decisions about family plans, schedules, and chores at home.

Teens may be worried about bringing the virus home from school or activities to parents or grandparents. Remind them to take precautions like wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing—but then try to let go of the worry.

Encourage your children of any age to talk about their thoughts and feelings. Be a good listener!

CHANGES AT SCHOOL

Prepare them for what to expect

Share what you know about what school will look like. Explain the safety changes like wearing face masks all day, just like their teachers, as well as social distancing measures inside and outside of the classroom.

Making sure that your child has a predictable routine leading up to school can help kids feel more secure.



SOURCES:

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