



GREAT BEGINNINGS

Education experts and award-winning teachers (who are also parents!) share their advice on coping with first-month challenges
by Lynne Ticknor, M.A.

VEER (RM)

Ready to Go

Your little one will be away from home for the first time on a regular basis. You can ease her (and yourself) into the preschool routine with these preparatory tips

» **Visit** the school before class starts (explore the playground!) to get familiar with the surroundings while you're both relaxed.

» **Hang** a picture of the teacher on your refrigerator at home, before or during the first week of school, so he or she becomes a familiar face.

» **Practice** spending time away from your child, even if it's just getting a babysitter for an hour while you go out for coffee.

» **Capture** a scent (perfume, lotion, etc.) that your child associates with you in a zip-lock baggie for him to keep in his cubby. Scents have a powerful effect on mood and a quick sniff of a familiar one often comforts a child who is struggling with homesickness.

» **Play** school. Practice lining up single file by



arranging stuffed animals one after another. Role-play circle time and Show

and Tell so that your child knows what to expect when he goes to class.

Tell the TEACHER

1 If your child has any large group setting experience

2 About recent family changes (new sibling? loss of a pet?)

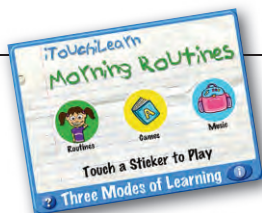
3 Your child's interests and fears

4 Concerns you may have about your child's development

Source: Sheila Warchock, Preschool Educator at EduKids Early Childhood Center in West Seneca, NY

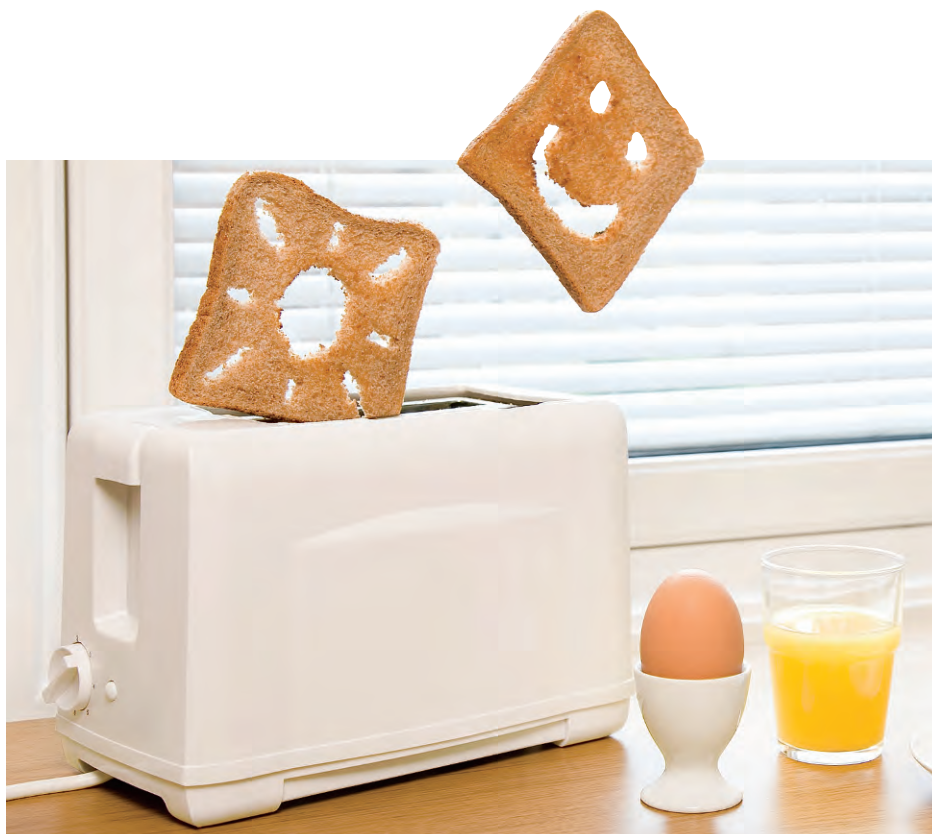
» **Share** an article of clothing. Allow your child to choose your scarf or Dad's tie to put in his backpack. Some children are comforted just by holding or touching something that reminds them of loved ones.

Source: Barbara K. Polland, professor of child and adolescent development at California State University, Northridge and co-author of Separation: Supporting Children in Their Preschool Transitions



SMART APP! iTouchiLearn Musical Morning Routines

Through catchy songs and interactive games, this clever app for the iPad can help your preschooler learn to understand and embrace morning routines. *Staytuned, free.*



Popping with Energy

Full days of structured activities in kindergarten require sustained energy. Take steps to begin building your child's physical and mental stamina

Tell the TEACHER

- 1** The name your child would prefer to be called
- 2** About medical conditions or allergies your child has
- 3** Your child's birth order and the names of his siblings (and pets he has!)
- 4** Your child's strengths and favorite activities

Source: Gay Beck, kindergarten teacher at Highland Elementary and Utah Teacher of the Year 2011

» **Serve** a high protein breakfast. Eggs, cheese, almonds, fish, yogurt, and beans are all excellent options. Proper nutrition keeps energy levels up.

» **Set** your child's biological clock. Darkness increases the release of the body's sleep hormone, while bright light sends the "Time to be active!"

signal. Dim the lights an hour before bed, and fill the morning routine with light where you can.

» **Model** a positive, mindful attitude. When you are feeling tired or cranky yourself, address the issue and talk out loud about what you need in order to get back to an energized place. This way your child

can learn to do the same when she feels out of sorts.

» **Ensure** she gets 10 to 12 hours of sleep per night. Warm blankets and a cool room can help her drift off more quickly and sleep more deeply.

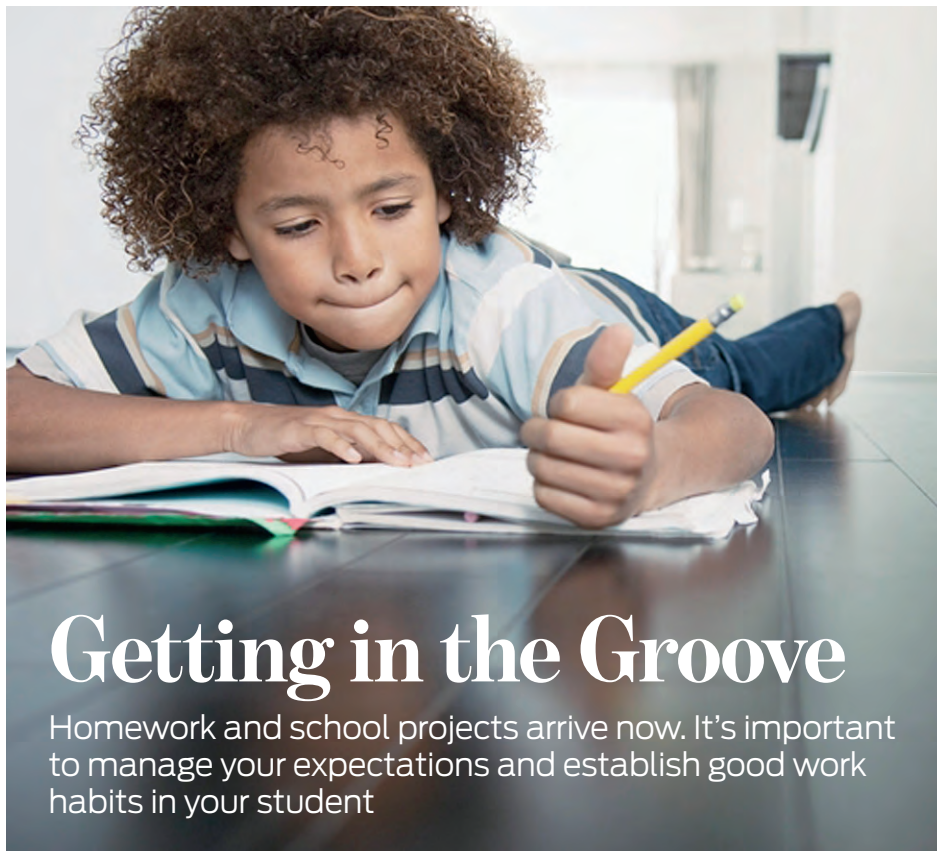
» **Teach** your child how to relax. When children (and adults) are anxious, their

brains don't function well. A few simple relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, can go a long way.

Source: Elizabeth Pantley, parenting educator and author of eight parenting books including The No-Cry Discipline Solution: Gentle Ways to Encourage Good Behavior Without Whining, Tantrums, & Tears



SMART APP! **TeachMe: Kindergarten** Recently updated, this award-winning app for the iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad is designed to help kindergartners practice sight words, early math skills, and spelling. Tracks performance per subject and provides rewards like virtual sticker scenes. 24x7digital LLC, \$1.



Getting in the Groove

Homework and school projects arrive now. It's important to manage your expectations and establish good work habits in your student

» **Decide** how *you* will behave. Are you going to yell and scream when things get tense? Will you stand over your child and force her to do her multiplication drills? Focus on being a calming influence when academic pressure heats up.

» **Remember**, it's his homework, not yours! Take a step back (or step

totally out of it) until your child specifically asks for your help. It will teach him independence.

» **Consider** a tutor. Many parents expect that they can provide any assistance their child needs. But a tutor can help to avoid the stress and arguments that often come with trying to take on that responsibility.

» **Don't take it personally.** If your child doesn't want your input, or if he asks for it and then immediately rejects it, keep your personal feelings out of it. How he does his homework is his choice.

» **Enjoy** the time. Try not to overreact about the finished project but

instead relish the sight of your child taking control of it. Ask questions. Get involved in what your child is thinking and learning, rather than what she's producing.

*Source: Neil McNerney, LPC
Licensed Counselor and author of **Homework: A Parent's Guide to Helping Out without Freaking Out***

Tell the TEACHER

1 If your child routinely eats breakfast

2 How much sleep she typically gets per night

3 Hobbies or interests of his that might be used to pique his interest in school

4 The main things you hope to see your child accomplish this year

Source: Andrea Peterson, music teacher at Monte Cristo Elementary in Granite Falls, WA, and National Teacher of the Year 2007



SMART APP! Stack the States

A rich way to learn about geography! Silly games and animated states with colorful personalities teach kids about state names, locations, nicknames, abbreviations, and more. For iPhone and iPad. Dan Russell-Pinson, \$1.

Balance and Grace

Homework, sports, dance lessons—many tweens have packed schedules. Where does schoolwork fit in? These ideas can help her learn to prioritize

» **Let** your child take a “fall.” We learn from making mistakes. If your tween doesn’t study for a test because she’s too busy going out with friends or playing sports, she’ll get a poor grade. But she’ll learn from that failure and hopefully she’ll make a different choice the next time.

» **Introduce** your child to other successful children. Let her talk to and hang out with smart, motivated kids who are just a few years older. Tweens need to see what success looks like in other kids.

» **Keep** your attitude in check. You can’t scream at your child, lose patience with him, and call him lazy if you expect him to be kind, patient, and respectful. Your child is



watching—and replicating—how you behave.

» **Encourage** him to play music. Music and the arts can focus kids and teach

them about concentration, taking chances, and making and correcting mistakes.

» **Be** a lifelong learner. If you’re watching TV

Tell the TEACHER

1 Your child’s honest view of school

2 What you think would motivate her to perform at a high academic level

3 If your child works better in groups or independently

4 Your child’s learning style
(See p. 82 for more about this topic.)

Source: Webb Lippert, Reading Teacher at Lime Kiln Middle School in Fulton, MD

every night, your kids will likely do the same rather than study, read, or pursue an interesting hobby. Enroll in a class. Pick up a book. Explore new areas of interest.

Source: Rafe Esquith, national award-winning teacher and author of Lighting Their Fires: Raising Extraordinary Children in a Mixed-Up, Muddled-Up, Shook-Up World

LYNNE TICKNOR, M.A., is a certified parent educator, parenting consultant, and writer. Visit her at lynneticknor.com.



SMART APP! Virtual Flash Cards We’re not always big fans of the classic drill-and-kill flash card routine, but the digital version of this learning technique offers a fresh spin. Use one of the decks in the library on this app for the iPhone and iPad. A quick, portable study tool! *Jeff Holiday Software, free.*