

# Starting school

## TIP SHEET



**Starting school is a time of great change for new prep students and parents. For your child, this can be an exciting time of new friends, activities and experiences. Some children, however, find the disruption to their regular and familiar routine to be daunting, confusing or upsetting.**

Children may find the increased structure, longer days and rules of school to be very different from what they are used to at kinder, child care or at home. The transition to life at school is an important one.

Consider the following tips to help make the process smooth.

### 1 Preparing

Most children will already have visited their school and met their teacher and fellow students before the start of the school term.

Through school orientations, children and parents will have learnt where to find their classroom, playground and toilets.

Help your child to prepare for the first few days and weeks of school by encouraging them to try on their school uniform, or pick their clothes to wear in advance of the first day of school. Make sure that they know how to open their drink bottle and lunch box, and what is to be eaten at play lunch or lunch time.

If your child is worried about something in particular, such as making friends, talk to them about strategies that could help. Remind your child that the other new prep students will be feeling the same way.

Although a child may be excited about starting school, they may find that it isn't what they expected and become discouraged. Talk to your child about what school will be like and their expectations.

### 2 Routine

Establish good routines for before and after school. This may include restricting television before school, play time after school and a consistent bed time routine.

Make sure that you leave plenty of time to get to school, say goodbye and leave confidently once your child has settled in.

As school can be very tiring for new prep students, a cool drink or snack in the car when you pick them up after school can help them recover for the afternoon.

While your child's school may offer structured after-school activities and sports, make sure that your child also has some 'down time' to allow for unstructured play time and to relax.

### 3 Changes as a parent

As a parent of a new prep student, you may find the changes associated with your child starting school affect you as well.

Some parents find it difficult when they no longer spend as much time with their child during the day as they used to. For others, as their child's world expands and they meet new teachers and friends parents may find that they are no longer their child's sole focus.

While these changes may require some adjustment, remember that your child is taking important development steps and developing increased independence.

### 4 Talking things through

*Talk to your child.*

Listen to how they feel about school, and any difficulties they are having. Reassure them and talk about strategies to help.

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### *Talk to other parents.*

While all prep students will adjust to school life differently, by talking to others you can understand that many families are experiencing similar issues. Other parents are great resources for new strategies or ideas.

### *Talk to the class teacher.*

They are very experienced and can help you with any concerns you may have.

## 5 Taking time

Remember that the school transition process takes time.

All children develop differently, and your child may take more or less time to adjust to school life, and learn new skills differently.

The most important thing is that your child feels happy and settled in the new school life. If you can achieve this, the rest will generally follow.

### More information

The Victorian Government has a range of resources for parents of new primary school students. For more information visit [www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/going-to-school/Pages/tips-starting-school.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/going-to-school/Pages/tips-starting-school.aspx)

The Better Health Channel provides a guide for parents of prep children called *A healthy start to school*. The booklet can be downloaded and ordered from [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/a-healthy-start-to-school](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/a-healthy-start-to-school)

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