



Last Summer Before School: How to Prepare Yourself and Your Kid Mentally. Tips from a Psychologist

www.kidsacademy.mobi



Hi! I'm Jorezza Antonio, an elementary teacher and licensed psychometrician. I have taught children from kindergarten to fifth graders, including those with special needs, and have been practicing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) for managing students' behaviors.

Is your kid starting kindergarten this year? That might feel both exciting and overwhelming... and maybe even a little sad, because you never expect them to grow so fast!"



As a kindergarten teacher, I have witnessed different situations on the first day of school. Some children excitedly rush into the classroom and begin playing with their friends, while others cling to their parents and cry as they enter. We always strive to comfort both child and the parent in these moments, aiming to ensure that they both feel safe and secure as they begin their school day.

The start of school is a significant milestone, not just for your child but for you as well. It marks the end of their toddler years and begins a new chapter filled with learning, new friendships, and increased independence. As summer unfolds, now is the perfect time to prepare both your child and yourself for this transition. It's an opportunity to ease into change, nurture confidence, and grow together. Here are some ways to make the last summer meaningful for both of you.

Understanding the Emotional Landscape

Children often feel excited and nervous before starting school. They are curious about many things, but a small fear lingers because they know they will be away from their parents. Parents experience similar feelings: a whirlwind of anxiety, sadness, and pride as they watch their children take this big leap. Many parents wonder: Will they be okay without me? Are they ready for this new journey?



While the back-to-school checklist typically includes items like school supplies, paperwork, and a uniform. There is one more thing that both you and your child need to prepare for, which is just as important: mental and emotional readiness.

Building Emotional Readiness

1. Practice separation. Try scheduling playdates or a visit to their grandparents. Let your child know that you will leave but always come back, and be sure to keep your promises to build trust. This approach will also help you gradually give them space and responsibilities.
2. Talk about what to expect and reflect on your school memories. Discuss what they can expect at school and reflect on your school memories. Use books or role-play to illustrate different scenarios. Familiarity can help alleviate fears.
3. Encourage self-expression. Ask your child how they feel about starting school. If they struggle to articulate their feelings, encourage them to draw their emotions or use toys to act things out. Sharing your feelings about them going to school can help both of you understand that experiencing emotions, including anxiety, is perfectly normal.

4. Boost confidence. Encourage your child to be independent by dressing themselves, packing their bags, and even ordering food on their own! These small victories help them feel capable and prepared for school, while also reassuring you that they will be okay without you.

Developing Key Skills and Habits

1. Establish a routine. Begin by gradually adjusting your child's wake-up and bedtime to align with their school schedule. Encourage your child to wake up early and have breakfast at the same time each day. Ensure that they get enough sleep so they have the energy they need when school starts. Consider incorporating winding-down activities, such as reading or listening to music, before bedtime.



2. Learn basic skills. Kindergarten is a crucial time for your child to develop essential skills like writing, reading, and math.

- Encourage activities that enhance their fine motor skills, such as colouring, drawing, playing with play-dough/blocks, using droppers/clothespins, and cutting.

- Help your child recognize letters and numbers to prepare them for learning these concepts in school. Interactive games like [Kids Academy's Math and Reading Games](#) can make learning enjoyable! Additionally, you can sing songs, read books with simple words, and practice writing together.
 - Read [this article](#) written by an elementary teacher. It provides you with a check-list of all the key skills advised to have before Kindergarten, alongside relevant learning resources.
3. Practice personal skills. Teach your child personal skills they will need in school, such as opening their lunchbox/snack wrappers, washing their hands, putting on shoes, covering their mouth when they sneeze/cough or using a tissue, and zipping their bag.
4. Practice listening and following directions. You may do this with easy tasks like "Please pack away your toys" or "Please put your clothes in the cabinet." You may also try to play games with following directions as its main theme like "Snakes and Ladders" or "Stop and Go." This will give them a sense of independence and pride.
5. Socialization. Starting school is a big adjustment for children as they will meet new friends. To help your child adapt to being in a large group, consider the following:
- Sign up for summer classes. You may try to enrol your child on summer classes that will give them an opportunity to be in a big group. You may also arrange playdates or let your child join playdates. This will encourage them to share and take turns, and play cooperatively with other children.



- Encourage using polite language. At home, use “please,” “excuse me,” and “thank you.” When you consistently model these words in conversations with your child, they are more likely to adopt them, which will help them build positive relationships with their peers and teachers.
- Discuss emotions. Help your child understand their feelings as well as the feelings of others. Talk about the different types of emotions and provide guidance on how to handle strong feelings. Let your child know that it’s okay to ask for help and to make mistakes.

By taking these steps, you are helping your child and yourself be ready for the school year - mentally, emotionally, and skillfully!

It’s a Season of Growth!

Summer isn’t just about preparing for school; it’s about embracing a new season with mindfulness and love. As your child prepares to take their first steps into a bigger world, you’re also evolving into the parent of a school-aged child.

Take this time to breathe, bond, and believe. Both of you will be okay. In fact, you’re going to grow in ways you never imagined.

References

Almwriting. (2025, May 8). Get ready for kindergarten: summer prep tips for parents - Lyndon Learning Childcare. Lyndon Learning Childcare. <https://lyndonlearningchildcare.com/get-ready-for-kindergarten-summer-prep-tips-for-parents>

Cincinnati Children’s. (2025, January 8). 7 tips to Mentally Prepare your child for the school year. Cincinnati Children’s Blog. <https://blog.cincinnatichildrens.org/healthy-living/child-development-and-behavior/7-tips-mentally-prepare-child-school-year>