

create space. make time.



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Organizing for a stress-free back to school...

Every year families face the challenging period of transitioning from relative relaxation to the busyness of full work, school and activity schedules. Throw into that the pending climate change and you've got a lot to manage in a short time. The following tips provide helpful ways to smooth the transition.

Manage your space

1. **Create homes for the items that move in and out of the home regularly.** Backpacks, equipment for activities, homework, lunches: all of these things need to have "homes" within the home. Making space to store often used items makes them easy to put away, and even better, easy to find when you're in a rush to get out the door. If the most often used doorway is too small to store these items, create an accessible storage space in another area of the home. With a little practice, family members will soon find it's worth the effort to put things where they belong.
2. **Develop a lunch prep system.** Get kids involved in deciding what will be on the lunch menu so you know they'll eat it. For even more commitment, involve them in making the lunches. Store all your lunch-making containers and supplies together and in easy reach. Encourage kids to take apart their lunch bags when they return home.
3. **Figure out where to work.** If your kitchen table is also homework central, place supplies in containers that can be easily moved out of the way when it's time to eat. If kids have a dedicated workspace make sure it's well lit and ergonomically comfortable for them. Pay special attention to how much time is spent on the computer and ensure they are working safely. Adjustable seating, footrests and keyboard trays can improve the comfort of a workspace.
4. **Plan new clothing purchases.** Start by editing the child's wardrobe to see what still fits from last season. Then determine what you need to buy to complete their fall wardrobe. Rearrange clothing to keep the current season's clothes most easily accessible.



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Manage your time

1. **Begin the adjustment to school hours the last week of vacation.** To avoid a shock to everyone's system on the first day of school, consider adjusting sleep and rising times during the last week of vacation to mimic the school year. It will make those first few days less of a struggle in the morning.
2. **Establish a central calendar.** Both adult and childrens' activities and appointments should be captured in one central calendar. Ideally this should be kept near a phone and space to write so adjustments can be made easily. Invest time in transferring school and activity calendars so there is only one place to look to determine family commitments. It will help avoid over-booking and flag when you need to make childcare arrangements.
3. **Plan time carefully.** Make an effort to understand the demands of the upcoming school year and extra-curricular activities to make sure that your child has adequate rest and downtime.

Manage your information

1. **Collect reference material in one place.** Place all reference material such as class lists, team contact lists and school rules in folders or a binder for reference. Also include regularly referred to information such as city service guidelines, restaurant menus, often used services. If you use a three-ring binder, keep a three-hole punch with the binder to make it easy to add material. Clear pockets also make it easy to pop in new information.
2. **Set up a system for paperwork.** Permission slips and notes to teacher will transfer smoothly if the child has a designated place in his or her backpack to carry the notes, and develops the habit of checking it daily. Create your own stationery including contact information.
3. **Children's artwork and projects.** Children put a great deal of effort and personality into their projects. While you may like to keep them all, your space can soon feel cluttered. Here are several ways to honour their efforts:
 - a. Frame special works and display them as pieces of art.
 - b. Create a portfolio, scrapbook or keepsake box – one per child – for them to put their creations in. Once the box is full, the children can decide what stays and what goes. Edit the container every year to make room for the next years work.
 - c. Take photographs of the artwork itself and of the artwork with the child. This works especially well for over-sized piece. Capture the pride your child is feeling!
 - d. Turn one wall into a massive bulletin board to show off kids artwork. This works well in a playroom or basement.