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Back-to-school tips that make the grade

So here it comes ... all those papers to sign, dates to remember, and homework, projects, and sport rosters to keep track of.

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So here it comes ... all those papers to sign, dates to remember, and homework, projects, and sport rosters to keep track of. It's enough to make you long for summer again. But a few easy tasks can help you get organized before that first bell rings.

Notebooks, Binders and Pens—Oh, My!

To keep school supplies handy, designate one spot in the house, such as a kitchen or office cabinet, to hold pencils, pens, markers, paper, extra notebooks, folders, and other items. Place a basket or bin for each child nearby to hold papers and assignments.

Mark Your Calendars!

Keeping track of who needs to be where and when can be daunting. Try a large whiteboard or paper calendar to record everyone's schedules and due dates. Use a different color marker for each child. Some whiteboards even have a bulletin board attached, where you can pin up permission slips or envelopes. A 3-ring binder with tabs and pockets can hold notes from teachers, permission slips, class syllabi, and all those dance, soccer, basketball and hockey schedules.

The Right Start

Are your weekday mornings hectic? Try pulling it all together the evening before. Put finished assignments into backpacks, pack lunches or lunch money, fill up any gym bags for after-school practice, and place everything by the front door. And, of course, choose and lay out outfits the night before.

Homework Hints

Establish an after-school routine. Kids need downtime to decompress from their day. Allow them to have a snack, play outside with friends, watch a TV program, play a computer game, or whatever works for your family. But then it is time to "hit the books." Homework should be started right before or right after dinner, so it won't last far into the night. A good night's rest is all-important to excelling the next day.

Heading back to school can be as stressful as it is exciting, for both kids and parents. Organizing your home and supplies beforehand will help you focus less on the anxiety, and more on the fun.

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