



TIP SHEET

Back to School Tips

Getting ready for the new school year can be a hectic and exciting time. However, for children with autism, all this change can feel overwhelming.

Here are some suggestions for how to help ease your child's back-to-school anxieties:

Scope out the school and classroom in advance. If your child is going into a new classroom, visit it at least once before the first day of school. If transition has been a struggle in the past, consider taking as much time as your child needs to explore the classroom. Make it as much fun as possible, playing in each of the new areas.

Check out seat assignments. For older children, ask the teacher if a seat assignment has been made. Do some enjoyable activities in that seat. If familiar classmates will be in the room, show where they will be sitting, too.

Rehearse new activities. Find out from the teacher what new activities are planned. Then, prepare your child by performing, practicing, and talking about them. This rehearsal will reduce anxiety when the new activities come up in the first week of school.

Anticipate sensory overload. The noise and chaos of a typical classroom can sometimes be a bit much to handle. Establish a plan for what to do in this situation – perhaps there is a quiet room where your child can “take a break” for a short time.

Volunteer in the classroom. Most teachers welcome assistance from parents. Your presence may be a source of comfort to your child during those challenging first weeks.

Going to school can pose many challenges for children with autism, as well as countless opportunities for building crucial social, language, and academic skills. Be positive and encouraging, and your child will be off to a great year!