

Early Learning Parents' Pages

BACK TO SCHOOL

EASE THE STRESS OF THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL, ENJOY FAMILY FUN MONTH AND MORE.

Make This School Year Great

Soon, many children will return to school, preschool or child care or start school for the first time. This can be an exciting time for both you and your child, but also a stressful time. Preparing in advance can make a big difference in the way your child will react to starting or returning to school.

A month ahead of the first day, set a bedtime routine for your child so she will receive enough sleep each night. Your child will have more energy and enjoy school more if she is well rested. Reading books about school and telling stories about when you started school can help ease any anxiety. Show your child pictures of you or other family members starting school and talk about your most favorite and least favorite times in school.



Let your child help select new clothes or school supplies she may need. Your child can help plan a new schedule for school days and organize materials she may need for her first day. Letting your child choose a backpack and fill it with supplies can be exciting.

Make sure you have any required paperwork, such as medical forms, parent contact information and permission forms, filled out and in your child's backpack a week ahead of time. Being organized helps you remain calm and the calmer you are, the better your child will feel about her first day.

Making several "trial runs" to and from school will help your child become familiar with her morning and afternoon routines. Whether you plan to walk or drive your child to school, or if she rides a bus, practicing the new route will help get her excited for the first day.



Research shows that parental involvement in their child's school and school-related activities is the best indicator of the child's success in school.

Attend any school meetings or orientations scheduled before school begins. You want to learn as much about the school and its policies and procedures and meet your child's teacher if possible.

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Baby Cues

Your new baby has arrived and you are learning about your new role as a parent. Although your baby cannot talk, he can communicate with you. His movements, the sounds he makes, his crying and her facial expressions [send you messages](#) about how he is feeling and what he needs. Recognizing the [cues your baby sends you](#) is the first step in parent-child communication.

If your baby is less than 3 years old and arches his back, stares into the distance, rubs his eyes, whines, sucks on his fingers or clenches his fists, your baby is telling you he is tired. Overtired babies may need a dark, quiet room, rocking with soothing talk or a breastfeeding or bottle to settle down for a nap.



Newborns need to be fed every two to three hours. A fussy baby is typically a hungry baby. Look for signs from your baby, such as sucking on his fingers or leaning toward you when you have food. They are cues that he is hungry.

[As your baby grows](#), he will be awake for longer periods of time. He will enter a phase categorized as the "feed-play-sleep pattern." If his eyes are wide and bright or he is looking at your face and smiling, it probably means he wants to play. He may also babble and coo or reach out to you to let you know he is ready to play.

[Learn your baby's cues](#), so you can both begin to understand each other's wants and needs.

Learning Every Day and Everywhere

Learning begins at [birth](#). Young children, toddlers and babies are learning new words, concepts and ways of thinking [every day and everywhere](#) they go. They develop language, literacy and social-emotional skills through interactions with people and the world around them.

How and what your child learns are determined by her environment and her family and caregivers. Your child's brain develops the most during her first 5 years of life. Your child will learn many skills and concepts through play and interactions with other children and adults, but your child's first and best teacher is you.



"New science tells us that our children's first 5 years are when they develop the foundation for all future learning. Whether it's mealtime, bath time or anytime in between, there are always ways to nurture our children's growing minds."

[Vroom!](#)



You have a busy life taking care of your family and may feel that you do not have enough time to plan learning activities for your child. Thankfully, your child will learn through many [routine activities](#) that

she experiences each day through watching and listening. Greeting your child as she awakens each morning and talking to her as you change her diaper or dress her helps her understand new words and concepts.



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Vroom! A New App for Families

From the moment your child is born, his brain is growing and developing with each interaction he has with you and others in the family. A new, free app for your phone or mobile device can turn these moments and interactions into brain-building moments.

vroom

Brain building moments

Vroom helps parents of children ages 0 to 5 turn mealtimes, bath times, car rides and other daily activities into chances to learn new words and concepts.

The Vroom app will send you tips to nurture your child's growing mind and can be downloaded at joinvroom.org. Parents can search the app for tips to use while waiting at the doctor's office, shopping at the grocery store or giving their child a bath. Each tip is followed by the "Brainy Background," which provides an explanation of how the tip influences your child's brain development.



Each Vroom tip is designed to fit your child's appropriate age group. You could receive tips such as "feeding memories" for children 0 to 8 months old or "sock sorters" for 4- to 5-year-old children. Each of these Vroom tips will explain how you can make a daily activity into a learning moment, while providing background information from the scientists and creators behind Vroom.

Encourage family members and friends to download the Vroom app so they can connect with your child, or their own children, through these learning activities.

Watch [videos](#) to learn more about Vroom and see parents using the Vroom tips. Parents and teachers can also follow the Florida Office of Early Learning on [Instagram](#) to receive "Vroom Tip Tuesdays" each week.

Make This School Year Great

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The night before the first day, have a special dinner and let your child help with cooking or planning the meal. Get your child to bed on time and make sure everything is ready for the next morning. The morning of the first day of school, ensure your child is awake early enough to get dressed and eat breakfast without rushing. Remember, traffic will be heavy on the first day, so allow extra time so your child does not arrive late to school or miss the bus.

During the school year, try to maintain the same morning and bedtime routines. Communicate regularly with your child's teacher and attend all parent-teacher conferences, if possible. Many schools offer websites with information for parents, including class information and upcoming events.

Read with your child every day. Make reading together a part of your child's bedtime routine and find out what she likes about her school and what happens each day. This lets you know what she is interested in and encourages her to learn more about things she does not like.

Your involvement in your child's school life is very important, whether it is attending meetings, conferences and events at the school or simply speaking with your child about school while you are getting her ready. Her attitude toward school will be positive if your attitude is positive as well.

Visit the [Back To School page](#) and [calendar](#) for more ideas.

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August is National Family Fun Month

What fun activities have you planned for your family to celebrate the last days of summer? Not all activities cost money and family fun can happen at home with no cost.

Before bedtime or on a hot evening, go outside and give each family member water balloons or a spray bottle filled with water for some water-soaked fun.



Stay inside and sing songs or dance around the house together or pull out an old board game. Families can also get outside and visit a local park for a picnic or go on a bike ride or a nice walk.

No matter what you plan to do during the month, try and let each family member pick out a special place to visit or a special activity to celebrate. Continue reading together each day before the first day of school, as it is one of the most important family activities.

Learning Every Day and Everywhere

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Being attentive to his needs and soothing him when he cries helps your child develop social skills and emotional attachments. Talk with your child as you feed him, play with him, bathe him or rock him to sleep to develop the language he needs to communicate with others.

Riding in the car or on a bus, taking a walk, eating a snack or lunch, taking a bath, shopping at the supermarket, getting dressed, playing with toys, and listening to you read a book are all learning opportunities for you child.

Parents can find many [resources](#) to assist them in making sure their child stays on track for learning moments. Resources such as [Vroom](#), the [Born Learning Toolkit](#) and more offer suggestions for parents to make every moment in their child's life a brain-building moment. Use these resources regularly and soon you will consistently think of ways to engage your child in every day learning.

Look Forward to These Articles in September

- Keep your baby safe at home, at school, in the car and everywhere you go with Baby Safety Month.
- Is your child learning and developing with the rest of his class? Find out during National Learning and Development Month.



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