



Starting School

How to handle the first few days

1. Making sure that everyone is comfortable is a team effort. Children can feel their parents' anxiety. The more the parents are anxious, the more the child will be too. The child is happiest if the parents are confident, relaxed, and seem completely on board with this new adventure. The parents must help the child see that they are happy and proud to see him/her grow up and take this important step of starting school.
2. It is perfectly normal for a child to cry at the beginning. Separation can be painful for some children and for many parents too. It can take time for both to adapt.
3. Always say goodbye to your child, even if he/she is crying. Sneaking out while he/she is not watching may be experienced as abandonment.
4. In our experience, the longer the parent stays in the classroom, the more difficult the separation proves to be. Even if your child is crying and it is hard for you to leave him/her in this state, you must be confident that leaving is the right thing to do. Trust the teachers and assistants; they have a lot of experience and will be able to help your child once you have left.
5. Stay calm, even if your child is crying and seems very distressed. In the vast majority of cases, he/she will stop very soon after you leave and go on to have a wonderful day!
6. Parents and teachers do not have the same roles. The teacher will be able to handle the situation once the parents are gone. While parents are still there, the teacher cannot intervene in the same way.
7. Make sure to tell your child that you will be back and help him/her understand that this is normal; this is a time when each of you has different things to do. "I (or we) am going to work and you are going to school like all the other kids, to learn."
8. Even after the routine is in place, some children may experience regression. This is typically seen on Mondays (after the weekend) and following the first school break in October. The pattern is usually set after this.
9. Don't be surprised if your child starts to cry even if he/she seemed fine at home earlier in the morning. Once in the classroom, a snowball effect may occur: when one child starts to cry, others may begin to cry as well. This is especially true at the beginning of the year.
10. It is not unusual for children not to cry the first couple of days but feel vulnerable only later in the week. Though they loved the first few days, they

hadn't quite expected school to be permanent. The teachers are experienced with this and will know just how to comfort your child.

11. Until your child gets used to the rhythm of the school day, it is possible that he/she will cry as the activities change in the day: recess, change of teacher, nap time...
12. Make sure you arrive early enough in the morning to give your child plenty of time to settle in. The morning welcome is an important moment for the young child to make the transition between home and school.
13. Each day your child will feel more comfortable in his/her new environment and the anxiety and distress will lessen until it is gone entirely. Very soon, your child will be excited and happy to go to school, and so will you!

At home: the parents' attitude

1. Prepare your child for the start of school. Talk about it. Explain to him/her what it will be like. A great way to do this is to read stories about it together.
2. Be yourself, be relaxed, be ready.
3. Remember to give your child a "lovey" or transitional object: favorite teddy bear...

At school: the teachers' attitude

1. The teacher and his/her assistant will help your child by comforting him/her and engaging him/her in fun activities.
2. If the child is an English speaker and if it is necessary, the teachers will speak to him/her in English to reassure him/her and better establish communication and understanding in these first few days.
3. In many classrooms, the teacher will help the child draw a picture of his/her family and will let them keep it during the day. The child will keep it with him/her and will be able to look at it whenever he/she wants. This way, the child feels like his/her family is at school, too.
4. There will books read on the subject in class so that children can identify with characters going through the same thing.
5. Children will practice meditation/mindfulness and breathing techniques to better overcome the difficult times.
6. The child will be constantly supported and encouraged in their efforts. The teachers' positive attitude helps with this. An award system may be used, if necessary.

If the child is sad

1. Tell your child you understand his/her distress and that it is alright to cry.
2. As parents, you must also accept that your little one may cry or can be scared, sad, or angry.
3. These are normal feelings; anxiety is particularly understandable in a foreign language context.

Your child will have a wonderful time at school. We look forward to a great year ahead!