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When Your Child Attends Kindergarten For the First Time

Is your child attending kindergarten for the first time? Parents will experience many different feelings about this important stage of their child's growth and development. There will also be many adjustments to make as routines and schedules are adapted to this new situation. This is an exciting time for families and Invest in Kids has prepared a survival guide which we hope will support parents and their children as they cope with these changes and provide useful ideas and information that will help them along the way.

In this section of the Survival Guide, parents will find:

- Suggested ways to prepare your child for kindergarten and to support his school readiness.
- Web links for provincial ministries of education as well as links to information about other education options (e.g., Waldorf, home schooling)

- Recommended picture books to share with your child that will encourage her to talk about starting school and share any questions or concerns she might have.
- Ideas that will help parents to manage their time, prepare quick and nutritious meals, and make the most of the time they have for interacting with their child.

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Getting Ready for Kindergarten
A Checklist for Parents and Children

September is just around the corner. Is it possible that your child is starting kindergarten already? There are many things she needs to know and lots of ways that parents can help to prepare their child for starting school. Below are some suggestions for building your child's skills and knowledge, establishing and adjusting to new routines, becoming acquainted with the new school, reducing your child's anxieties and helping her to enjoy a successful first day of school.

School Readiness Skills

- ☐ My child and I practice basic math skills together, like counting to ten, sorting objects by size and shape, and identifying some number symbols.
- ☐ My child is able to read her own name, to listen attentively when being read to and tell me stories. She enjoys rhymes and recognizes rhyming words.
- ☐ My child can do many things independently, like button shirts and zip up zippers, and use the bathroom without too much help.
- ☐ My child is beginning to share with others and can understand and follow rules. She is becoming able to control her emotions and to talk about her feelings.

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Establishing Routines

- ☐ I ensure that my child gets at least ten hours of sleep each night. Being well-rested will increase his enjoyment of school and support his learning.
- ☐ My child and I have a bedtime routine where we can enjoy quiet time together, sharing story books and snuggling up for a while.
- ☐ Each night, we lay out the clothes my child will wear and decide what we will have for breakfast. This helps us to avoid rushing around in the morning.
- ☐ My child and I start our day with a “getting ready” routine. Consistent routines help my child to predict what will happen next and to be more co-operative.

Helping the Family Adjust

- ☐ We plan to implement our new routine one to two weeks before school starts. This will make the transition back to school go more smoothly.
- ☐ Our family enjoys eating dinner together. This is a special time to talk about what is happening at school and to find out what my child is learning.
- ☐ We use a large calendar to keep track of each person’s schedule and all the events that are taking place now that school is starting.
- ☐ My child has helped to create a special area for doing homework. This will encourage him to do assignments, and prevent these from getting lost.

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Getting Acquainted with the New School

- ☐ My child and I have practiced using the route to school to help him to recognize various landmarks and feel comfortable with the experience.
- ☐ We have visited the new school and had an opportunity to explore where things are (e.g., her classroom, the library, bathrooms and the office).
- ☐ My child has been able to meet his new teacher ahead of time. This will help him to feel more at ease on the first day of school.
- ☐ I have let the teacher know about specific needs that my child has (e.g., health concerns, medications) so that she will feel secure in the teacher's care.

Reducing "First-Day" Anxieties

- ☐ I have read many story books with my child about the first day of school. This has given her a chance to ask questions and express any concerns.
- ☐ My child has a toy/blanket that gives him comfort, and a family photo. Bringing these to school with him will make the transition much easier.
- ☐ I have talked to my child ahead of time about what to expect at school, and assured her that I will be there at the end of the day to pick her up.
- ☐ When my child talks to me about her worries and asks me questions, I listen and let her know that she can always talk to me if it makes her feel better.

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Enjoying a Successful First Day of School

- ☐ I have made arrangements to spend time with my child on her first day of school so she knows I care about helping her to adjust to the new routine.
- ☐ I will take time to hear all about what child did in kindergarten and show my enthusiasm. This will help her look forward to each new day at school.
- ☐ My child and I will introduce ourselves to other parents and children. This will make it easier for him to make new friends.
- ☐ My child and I have planned a special activity for the end of the first day of school so we can celebrate how grown up she has become.

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Q: How do I prepare my child for kindergarten?

A: As your child's first day of school creeps up, **you will both experience different feelings.** You're excited that he's old enough to start school. At the same time, you wonder if he will adjust to the new routine.

Your child may also be excited. But if she's never spent time away from you she may **feel a bit overwhelmed** by the prospect. Similarly, for a child who is already in a childcare setting, spending part of her day in junior or senior kindergarten may pose some new challenges. A new and unfamiliar routine and teacher may take some getting used to.

Whether it's your child's first time away from you or he's making the transition from childcare to school, here are some things you can do to help make the move easier.

1. Talk about the new routine.
   Talk to your caregiver about the new routine when school starts. Share this with your child so he is prepared for the change.

2. Talk about what won't change.
   Prior to school starting, both you and your caregiver can talk about Kindergarten, providing reassurance by reminding your child about all the things that will still be the same.

3. Visit the school in advance.
   If possible, during the summer, visit the school your child will be attending. If there is a playground, you may even want to spend some time there letting her play to become familiar with the environment.

4. Find out the name of your child's teacher.
   School administrative offices are often open before the first day of school and may be able to provide you with some information.

5. Ease your child into class.
Ask the school if you can visit during the first week perhaps staying for the first hour or until your child seems settled.

6. Reassure your child that you will be back.
Make sure your child knows who will pick her up when school finishes. An anxious child may want to know exactly when that will be. Offer a cue from the routine, for instance: “After you clean up the room you will hear the bell ring and you will know it’s time to go home. We’ll be waiting to pick you up.”

7. Be enthusiastic about school.
Talk about the wonderful things he will be doing at school – making friends, different kinds of art and play activities and of course learning. This should be done at home with you as well as with your child’s caregiver.

8. Help your child find friends from school.
Find other children in the neighbourhood attending school. Your caregiver can help. Talk about them noting how much they enjoy school. Schedule some play dates in advance and have at least one familiar face.

9. Share your own stories.
Talk about some of your own stories about school – what was it like for you when you started. If there are older siblings have them join in also.

10. Get ready together.
Include her in the preparation for school. This can be as simple as deciding on snacks to send each day or buying school supplies. Including her will make her feel that this day is special and it really is all about her.

11. Share the excitement of growing up.
Starting school is often seen as a sign of being a “big boy”. Talk to your child about how he feels about school. Being a “big boy” may be just what he wants or the prospect may be overwhelming. Be sensitive to his feelings and gently continue to talk about the wonderful things that happen at school.

12. Create a neighborhood walking bus.
If there are other children in the neighborhood who your child knows and will be attending the same school you may want to walk to school together giving a sense of community to your child even away from his home.

13. Make a special exhibit at home.
Set up a special place at home where your child will be able to display work that comes home from school. Even before school starts you can decorate this space together.

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Q: How Can Play Contribute to My Child's School Readiness?

A: In September, many children will attend school for the first time. They will be expected to be able to *communicate, to demonstrate basic knowledge, to socialize with others* and to show independence. As a parent, you may wonder if your child is adequately prepared for these expectations in kindergarten. Do play experiences in the early years provide a solid foundation for your child's school readiness? How can you, as a parent, and other care providers develop children's academic skills through play? Here are some activities you can enjoy with your child which are examples of how play nurtures the skills that contribute to school readiness.

Communication: Play with Spoken and Written Words

- Talk to your child often and show her the many ways she can use language. Engage your child in storytelling experiences. As she listens to the words and participates in telling stories, she will learn important conversational skills. Sing songs, recite rhymes and do fingerplays together to help your child to hear the intonation and rhythm patterns of language. Introduce your child to new and interesting words, to help her build her vocabulary. *These are ways to teach your child to love language and to enjoy the wonder of words!*

- Show your child how writing can help him to express his ideas. When your child draws pictures, ask him to tell you a story about them and write down his words. This allows him to see the relationship between spoken words and text. Include paper and writing tools among his toys and dramatic play props so he can explore the different ways he sees writing used through his imaginative play (e.g. making lists or creating a birthday card). *As he practices printing he will discover that the magical markings he is making have meaning!*

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Basic Knowledge:
Play to Encourage Literacy and Basic Math Skills

- Read to your child every day. As you enjoy your child's favourite books together, help her to identify alphabet letters and to recognize and make their sounds. Explore words in the story. What do they mean? Can she find examples of different words around the house? Talk about the story and ask open-ended questions about the characters. Can she guess what might happen next? Invite your child to tell you a story about the pictures and then see how closely her words match the text. *Story time can give your child reading skills that last a life time!*

- Build your child's understanding of math concepts like counting, sorting, patterning, recognizing shapes and measuring through his every day play. Recite rhymes like One, Two, Buckle My Shoe to familiarize your child with number words. When your child plays with toys, count them so he can match the words to actual objects. At tidy up time he can sort the cars, people and blocks into separate baskets. Make necklaces from beads of different shapes, sizes and colours to create patterns. Provide building materials for your child or recyclable items for creating three-dimensional artwork. Make a growth chart so your child can discover how tall he is. *Exploring math in ways that are fun will add to his math skills one by one!*

Socializing: Play to Support your Child's Interactions

- Play and interact with your child every day. Parents are a child's first playmate, so it is important to make time together for games and make-believe. When you play with your child, you will see things from her point of view and have the chance to follow her lead. She will also learn from your example and have your support as she learns about rules, other people's feelings and solving problems. *Entering the world of your child's play helps your child to enter the world of school confidently!*

- Encourage your child to engage in dramatic play experiences with his peers. As children interact in an imaginary situation (e.g. doctor's office), they talk, assign roles, create and follow rules and use symbolic thinking as they decide upon using one object to represent another (e.g. a block is a telephone). These are important social and thinking skills that they will use as they learn to co-operate, take turns and get along with others. *Pretend play prepares your child for kindergarten in very real ways!*

Being Independent: Play to Build Confidence and Self-Control

- Help your child to develop strategies for controlling his emotions, behaviours and thoughts. Talk about the way people in storybooks and pictures are feeling, and talk about what might cause those feelings. This will teach your child the words for different emotions and help your child to describe his own feelings and those of other people. When playing games together, be a positive influence if your child gets upset. Help him to be calm, to try to remain positive and to know that he might not win or be first all the time. *Being able to calm himself on his own will help your child be more excited about being and playing with friends!*

- Provide opportunities for your child to practice self-help skills. Including clothing in your child's dramatic play props enables her to dress independently and to become more able to manipulate buttons, zippers, buckles, laces and Velcro. She will feel pride in her ability to do things for herself and develop the confidence to try when faced with new challenges in kindergarten. *The success she experiences when learning skills through play will encourage her to achieve success in other learning areas!*

There are many things that happen at home every day that help to build a strong foundation for your child's academic success. Remember, the time you spend playing with your child now is an investment in her future!

Learn about the Comfort, Play & Teach™ approach. In the **Activity Centre parents will find many ideas on how to support children's school readiness through play!**

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Comfort, Play & Teach™ Checklist
Building Important Learning Skills for Kindergarten

Comfort

- ☐ My child and I cuddle up and read books together. It is a special time to for us to bond, to read the text and to make up stories about the pictures.
- ☐ I praise my child's efforts to count household objects like toys, shoes, and show her how proud I am that she knows some numbers
- ☐ My child tells me stories about his pictures and I write these down for him so he begins to understand the relationship between spoken and written words.
- ☐ I listen to my child, and try to demonstrate how to look when someone is talking, to wait my turn to speak, and show my interest by asking questions.

Play

- ☐ My child and I play I Spy games, looking for different words we see around us (e.g., on street signs, shopping bags, posters, and cereal boxes).
- ☐ I provide craft activities that encourage my child to explore shapes and sizes. He builds with recyclable materials like paper tubes, boxes, and cone cups.
- ☐ My child and I explore writing words and letters in all kinds of different places – in the sand, on steamed up windows and even using finger paint!
- ☐ I make sure my child has opportunities to play with others, and to practice important social skills like sharing, waiting and taking turns.

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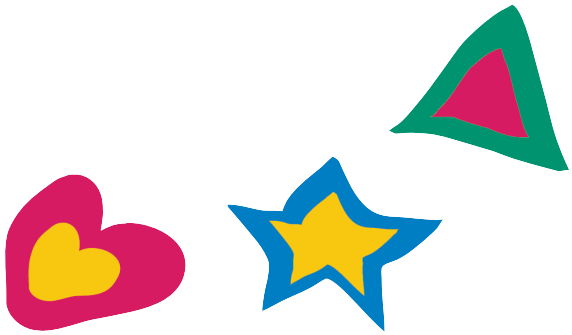
Teach

- ☐ I read in front of my child. This encourages him to see reading as a fun, interesting and grown-up thing to do, and to want to read too!
- ☐ My child and I play games together like Snakes and Ladders and Dominoes. This encourages her to learn about numbers in a way that is fun.
- ☐ I provide my child with a variety of writing materials like markers, crayons, chalk and colour pencils. He enjoys printing his name and different letters.
- ☐ My child and I have established the routines and rules that will be in place once school starts (e.g., when to do homework, how much TV we can watch).



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Ten Ways to Enjoy Different Learning Experiences at Home

1. Involve your child in creating his own presents, greeting cards and gift wrap. This is a lovely chance for him to explore different art techniques like paper maché, collage, painting and printing, sculpting with play dough and to discover the enjoyment that comes from making something for another person.

2. Create a special storage box for dramatic play materials. Include things like hats, gloves, aprons, jewelry, cooking tools like a plastic bowl and wooden spoons, dolls, stuffed animals. Your child can role-model things she sees you doing and practice many important self-help skills as well.

3. Provide board books for your child to read to her teddy bears and dolls. She will model reading behaviours she has observed, and practice emerging literacy skills like turning pages, telling stories about what is in the pictures and recognizing letters and words.

4. Demonstrate different uses of numbers for your child. Do simple household arithmetic using a calculator. Measure a window space for new curtains. Weigh ingredients on a kitchen scale. Cross off the days on a calendar. Use a timer when cooking. He will see the different ways people use numbers.

5. Listen to different styles of music at home, (e.g., classical, rock, choral, baroque, country, jazz, opera, folk, and music from different cultures). Your child can dance, pat the beat on his lap, play along using instruments made from beautiful junk, or even try to sing the words. This will build his appreciation of music.

6. Walk in the neighbourhood with your child or bring a ball to the park and play soccer or catch. Encourage your child to xplore the climbing equipment, climbing the ladder or sliding down the pole. These are great ways to get some fresh air, to burn off a little bit of energy and to just enjoy each other's company.

7. Plant a garden or provide indoor planting experiences like creating a terrarium or sprouting seeds. Gardening invites children into the world of fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, and even weeds! Gardening lets children learn with their senses – touching soil, smelling flowers, seeing colours, or tasting scarlet runner beans.

8. Look at magazines and catalogues with your child. Ask her to cut out pictures of words that begin with different letters of the alphabet and glue these onto paper to create her own alphabet book. This will give her the opportunity to recognize the sound that each letter in the alphabet makes and to build her vocabulary.

9. Teach familiar songs and nursery rhymes to your child which include numbers. *One, Two Buckle My Shoe, The Ants Go Marching One by One* and *This Old Man* are fun songs that will help him learn to count to ten. He will want to sing these familiar songs again and again.

10. Cook with your child. Bake bread, brew tea, freeze popsicles, and shake cream into butter; all are ways to help your child to learn about the different foods people eat and how they are prepared, as well as concepts like change of state, hot and cold, and liquid and solid. When children cook, they observe, compare and problem-solve.

Books in We Recommend

- Amber Waiting by Nan Gregory
  http://www.investinkids.ca/DisplayExtension.aspx/ae591c05-47a7-48c0-ab74-edd7a58d0983/Pages/Books_detail.aspx?id=e5f07794-c5fc-4250-b42b-1b12457c8676

- Franklin Goes to School by Paulette Bourgeois
  http://www.investinkids.ca/DisplayExtension.aspx/ae591c05-47a7-48c0-ab74-edd7a58d0983/Pages/Books_detail.aspx?id=154f09c4-fd22-4670-a08a-85c24cf82539

- Jessica by Kevin Henkes
  http://www.investinkids.ca/DisplayExtension.aspx/ae591c05-47a7-48c0-ab74-edd7a58d0983/Pages/Books_detail.aspx?id=a06d470e-766d-4e02-8041-6e51841038d5

- Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten by Joseph Slate
  http://www.investinkids.ca/DisplayExtension.aspx/ae591c05-47a7-48c0-ab74-edd7a58d0983/Pages/Books_detail.aspx?id=516eb664-e8bf-46c3-a2c1-63d880d96edb

- On the Way to Kindergarten by Virginia Kroll
  http://www.investinkids.ca/DisplayExtension.aspx/ae591c05-47a7-48c0-ab74-edd7a58d0983/Pages/Books_detail.aspx?id=c0490719-f50b-44bb-85ec-aee17a100901

- The Bus for Us by Suzanne Bloom
  http://www.investinkids.ca/DisplayExtension.aspx/ae591c05-47a7-48c0-ab74-edd7a58d0983/Pages/Books_detail.aspx?id=5cbd9c6f-def1-4d45-ba33-29b936f36fc2

- The New Girl… And Me by Jacqui Robbins
  http://www.investinkids.ca/DisplayExtension.aspx/ae591c05-47a7-48c0-ab74-edd7a58d0983/Pages/Books_detail.aspx?id=ad06c544-8f8a-4293-9aee-59bacca07318

- Welcome to Kindergarten by Ann Rockwell
  http://www.investinkids.ca/DisplayExtension.aspx/ae591c05-47a7-48c0-ab74-edd7a58d0983/Pages/Books_detail.aspx?id=20a70158-6bc9-4848-9c06-23cecb223fe9

- When You Go To Kindergarten by James Howe
  http://www.investinkids.ca/DisplayExtension.aspx/ae591c05-47a7-48c0-ab74-edd7a58d0983/Pages/Books_detail.aspx?id=429a1639-008f-4e60-9c67-bdace481ec83

- Yoko by Rosemary Wells
  http://www.investinkids.ca/DisplayExtension.aspx/ae591c05-47a7-48c0-ab74-edd7a58d0983/Pages/Books_detail.aspx?id=e12b5279-c60a-4758-999d-b16c22308a07

Education Resources

- Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve
  http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fnih-spni/famil/develop/ahsor-papa_intro_e.html

- Alberta
  http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/

- British Columbia
  http://www.gov.bc.ca/bvprd/bc/channel.do?action=theme&channelID=-8409&navId=NAV_ID_province&crumb=B.C.+Home&crumburl=%2Fhome.do

- Manitoba
  http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/

- New Brunswick
  http://www.gnb.ca/0000/index-e.asp

- Newfoundland and Labrador
  http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/

- Nova Scotia
  http://www.ednet.ns.ca/

- Nunavut
  http://www.gov.nu.ca/
- Ontario
  http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/
- Prince Edward Island
  http://www.gov.pe.ca/education/index.php3
- Quebec
  http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/GR-PUB/m_englis.htm
- Saskatchewan
  http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/
- Yukon
  http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/
- Information for Newcomers to Canada
  http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/schools.asp

Other Options for Education

- Froebel
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Froebel
  http://www.friedrichfroebel.com/
- High Scope
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High/Scope
  http://staging.highscope.org/index.asp
- Homeschooling
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homeschooling
  http://homeschooling.about.com/cs/supportgroups/a/hscanada.htm
  http://www.hslda.ca/

- Montessori Method
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montessori_method
  http://www.montessori.edu/

- Waldorf Education
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldorf_School
  http://www.awsna.org/

Child Care

- Canada's Universal Child Care Plan
  http://www.universalchildcare.ca/en/home.shtml

- Canadian Child Care Directory
  http://www.cfc-efc.ca/child_care/directory.htm

- Child Care Online
  http://childcare.net/indexnew.shtml

- Best Start
  http://www.children.gov.on.ca/CS/en/programs/BestStart/default.htm

- Canada Child Care Directory
  http://www.canadachildcaredirectory.com/

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Every Day

Q: Childcare and School: What should I do if my child doesn't want to go?

A: Some children become very anxious or scared about going to childcare or school. This is especially common in September, or when your child starts in a new setting. But it can happen at any time. The typical signs are complaints about feeling sick, crankiness, tantrums, saying he can't find things or refusing to get dressed or get in the car. This can be very stressful and frustrating. And it is usually difficult to tell whether he is really coming down with an illness, or whether he is anxious and developing physical symptoms that look like illness.

As a general rule, it is good to send a child along to daycare or school, unless they have signs of illness such as a fever or a sore throat. The longer children stay home when they are not sick, the harder it is to return to school. So it is better to send them, even if they are upset. Teachers and caregivers are very accustomed to dealing with this type of anxiety. And by all means, alert the school or daycare provider to what is happening, and ask them to monitor your child's health.

However, if you and your child have had a bad morning where he has become very upset about not wanting to go to school, find a time when you and your child are both calm to try to find out what went wrong. Talk with your child about his school fears and worries. Explain that there is no choice about going to school, but that you appreciate how he feels and will try to help.

Then talk to your child's caregiver or teacher and ask for help and advice. Sometimes anxiety can be eased by something as simple as the teacher changing your child's seat in the classroom. Or you or your child's teacher may notice that he is having difficulty making new friends. You can help in this situation by inviting these other children to play in your home.

If you are feeling guilty about leaving your child, she may pick up on these feelings and become anxious herself. Therefore, it's very important to show confidence that you know your child and your child's teacher or caregiver will have a good day when you leave them.

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Invest in Kids: Time Management Tips for Busy Parents

Once attending school or child care becomes part of a family's routine, there are many things parents can do to balance their time between work and home, to make morning transitions easier, to save time on meal preparation and to create time for relaxing and playing. Invest in Kids has prepared some suggested ways for parents to make the most out of their time and for maintaining balance in their lives.

Choosing Child Care

- If you are able to do so, selecting a child care centre that is near to where you work can help families to manage their time. Rather than coping with the stress of rushing across town to pick your child up after work, you can spend time talking to your child, finding out about his day and sharing stories about your own as you drive home together.

- Another alternative is to consider an in-home child care provider (e.g., a nanny) who will take over for you once you leave for work. This can help to make your morning routines more relaxed, encourage you and your child to enjoy each other's company. Knowing your child is in the care of someone you trust will help you to feel free of worry once you are at work.

Implementing a Morning Routine

- Establish a morning routine that involves doing particular things such as eating breakfast at the same time each day and doing routine things in the same order. This can save lots of time, and can also help you to remember to do important things, like bring permission letters to day care or kindergarten.

- Create a special corner for needed child care or kindergarten items. Have a bag or knapsack ready that holds everything you need (e.g., extra clothes, sleep toy) and check it regularly to replenish any items. Having needed materials prepared ahead of time will save the effort of looking for them at the last moment.

Menu Planning and Meal Preparation

- Set aside time to look through cookbooks and plan weekly menus. If your shelves are well stocked with basic ingredients, this will facilitate meal preparation. When cooking, make extra portions that you can freeze and re-heat later on. Consider time saving kitchen tools such as a slow cooker and microwave oven.

- Make arrangements with friends or neighbours to share the cost of groceries and each prepare extra portions of things such as chili, spaghetti sauce or casseroles that can be enjoyed by both your families. This is a nice way to develop friendships, in addition to saving time and adding exciting new recipes to your dinner menu.

- Consider shopping for groceries on-line as a way of saving some time. You can make your selections at your convenience and then the groceries will be delivered to your door. Some examples of this service include: **http://www.e-zgrocer.com/** and **http://www.grocerygateway.com/**.

- Explore services that prepare meals for you according to your specifications. You simply tell them what you need and then retrieve the prepared food later. Some sites to look into include: **http://www.letsmakeameal.ca/** and **http://www.dinnersready.com/canada/NowInCanada.aspx**.

- There are many cookbooks with quick and nutritious recipes and many websites with tempting recipes as well. Try the following and then see what you can find:

    - Solving the Dinner Time Dilemma
      http://life.familyeducation.com/dinner/foods/39392.html

    - Quick Healthy Meals for Busy Families
      http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/guide/quick-healthy-meals-for-busy-families

- Culinary.net
  http://www.culinary.net/recipes/index.html

- Food Network
  http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/lf_quick_easy/

- Canadian Living – Make it Tonight
  http://www.canadianliving.com/CanadianLiving/client/en/Food/ListNews.asp?IdSM=314

Making Time to Relax and Play

- Parents can reduce their own stress by sometimes saying “no” when they really do not have time or feel up to doing something. It is alright to make relaxing a priority and to keep special time open strictly for the purpose of doing a fun activity that is just for you.

- Ensure that your child gets sufficient time to enjoy unstructured play time where they can explore their own interests, play creatively and just day dream. While it is important for children to have educational experiences, it is equally important that they have the freedom to just play.

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Q: School: How can parents balance the new routine?

A: Starting child care or kindergarten is an important change for both you and your child. It may stir up many different feelings, and will likely affect your daily routine. Here are some suggestions that might help you cope more easily with this new transition and turn it into **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time!

Comfort

- Your child may need reassurance about her new teacher and learning environment. Prepare her for the new experience by talking about it ahead of time, and if possible, visit the new classroom and meet the teacher. School will seem more familiar that way, and going there each day may be easier.

- Encourage your child to participate in daily tasks like choosing the clothing he will wear to school the next day. Routines can provide him with a sense of predictability and security by enabling him to anticipate what will happen, and will give him some needed control over the new situation.

Play

- Both you and your child will have busy days now and will need opportunities just to relax and enjoy each other's company! Remember to set aside special time to go to the library, play at the park, bake blueberry muffins, dance to music or to simply cuddle up together and talk about the best part of your day.

- Provide your child with items she will need for playing school with her dolls. She will enjoy showing them how to colour, looking at books, singing the alphabet song, and printing with chubby pencils! Role playing school experiences will help her gain confidence as she practices all the new skills she is learning.

Teach

- Before bed time, relax and read books together like Franklin Goes to School (by Paulette Bourgeois) or Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten (by Joseph Slate). The words and pictures describe typical experiences at school, and will give your child a chance to ask questions and perhaps work out his fears.

- Share some of your favourite memories of school with your child. Show him school pictures and tell stories about your classroom, teachers and friends. He can compare similarities and differences between your school experience and his. Most importantly, he will learn that you were once a child and that you understand what he is experiencing now.

Q: Mornings: How can I make them more pleasant for my child?

A: Here are several strategies that may help make your mornings a little easier on everyone:

- It's important to allow enough time in the morning so that you don't have to rush, even if it means getting up a bit earlier than you already do. This will allow you to stay calm and avoid acting stressed around your child.

- Create a workable schedule and explain it to your child, so she knows what to expect in the morning. For example, let your child know she has to get up, get dressed, eat breakfast and leave the house by 7:30 am. It's also a good idea to keep this routine as regular as possible.

- Build in a little time for your child to play and give her the feeling she can come back to the game later.

- Try to lay out clothes, prepare lunches and pack up anything else that goes with your child the night before.

- Try to incorporate some fun into your morning rituals, such as singing songs and just getting a little silly together.

If your child seems tired, reassure him, but explain that he still has to get ready. And as frustrated as you might get, never yell at or physically hurt your child. Lastly, when you drop your child off, let him know that you're not angry with him and make it clear that you are coming back.

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Invest in Kids: How Parents can Take Care of their Needs When Their Child Begins Day Care or Kindergarten

When your child starts day care or school for the first time, as parents you may experience a range of feelings, such as happiness, pride and even anxiety. You will naturally want your child to fit in, to be stimulated and to feel good about his new environment and teachers. Adjusting to the new routine may be stressful, and place unexpected demands on the family for a while. How do parents deal with all of these changes? Invest in Kids has developed some suggestions for helping parents to address their feelings and to cope with all that comes with this new transition.

- Do what you can to prepare your child for starting day care or kindergarten (e.g., talk about the experience, read books together, visit the new classroom, meet the teacher). This will help your child to feel more positive about the experience. Knowing that your child feels ready will help you to feel more comfortable and confident when your child spends her first day at day care or school.

- Try to prepare for changes that will arise once your child begins to attend day care or kindergarten. How is your routine going to change and how might this go more smoothly? Are there younger siblings who will miss having a constant playmate and who will now want to spend more time with you? Explore different strategies for managing your time and for adapting to the new situation.

- Find ways to cope with stress that may accompany changes to family schedules and routines, or that result from work demands. Are there family members or friends who can provide you with help and support? Do you plan for regularly taking a bit of time out for yourself? It is important to make sure that that your own needs are met, so that you will feel more able to meet your family's needs.

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Every Day

- Take time to establish a relationship with your child's teacher and feel welcome to contact the day care or school with any questions or concerns you may have. You will feel reassured by regular communication about your child's progress. Finding a way to participate (e.g., by visiting the classroom) will give you the opportunity to observe your child and know that her needs are being met.

- Remember that the transition into day care or kindergarten is a process that takes time. This process will be affected as you and your child develop relationships with the teacher, and your child learns to interact with his peers. By communicating your own needs and observations about your child, you are helping the teacher to support all you do to help your child to feel successful.

- Know that it is alright to communicate your needs and feelings and to seek help with the job of caring for your child and encouraging him to learn. Every day you are facing new challenges and your life constantly changes as your child grows. Child care providers and teachers can be a source of support for you, and hearing from parents lets them know how to be more helpful to children and families.

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