



CREATING A NEW BACK TO SCHOOL RHYTHM

# PRESCHOOL

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The transition from summertime to back-to-school can happen so quickly that we're already in our new routine before we even realize it. Below are some suggestions for how to create an intentional and meaningful back-to-school rhythm for a preschooler in this phase\*:

*(\*Please note that many of these are transferable to other phases. Feel free to look through each list for additional ideas!)*

## **EVERY MORNING, YOU WILL SET THE MOOD FOR THE DAY.**

Reduce morning stress by setting out your child's clothes and packing bags the night before, and wake up to your alarm. Make it your priority to be prepared so you can focus on sending your child to school feeling loved and happy.

**ASK YOUR PRESCHOOLER TO HELP CREATE THE NEW SCHEDULE FOR YOUR MORNING ROUTINE.** Print out or draw pictures representing key points in the morning—wake time, breakfast, teeth-brushing, hair-brushing, dressing, time to leave, etc. Ask your preschooler to help you arrange the pictures in order. Post the schedule and use it as a daily guide.

**MAKE YOUR NEW DRIVE-TIME COUNT.** During the trip to and from your child's school, point out interesting or unique landmarks along the way, and sing preschool Bible songs together. On your way home, you can both share one "high" and one "low" of your day. Give your child words to help them express how those events made them feel.

## **INSTEAD OF SIMPLY ASKING ABOUT YOUR KID'S DAY, PLAY "SCHOOL" WITH YOUR PRESCHOOLER A FEW TIMES A WEEK.**

Take turns letting them be the teacher and you and/or their stuffed animals being the student(s). Ask them to show you (act out) something funny that happened, something that confused them, or something new they've learned.

For fresh ideas on connecting with your child every week, download the Parent Cue App, available on iTunes and Google Play.



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# ELEMENTARY

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The transition from summertime to back-to-school can happen so quickly that we're already in our new routine before we even realize it. Below are some suggestions for how to create an intentional and meaningful back-to-school rhythm for a kid in this phase\*:

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**SEND YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL FEELING AFFIRMED.** Say a short prayer over them as they leave, so they know that God is on their side throughout the day. Make it a practice of writing and sending notes of encouragement in your child's lunchbox or backpack so they are also reminded you are on their side.

**EACH DAY WHEN YOUR KID GETS HOME FROM SCHOOL, HAVE AN AFTER SCHOOL "CHECKLIST" POSTED FOR THEM TO FOLLOW.** Start off with at least 15 minutes of downtime, add in homework time, chore time, bath time, play time, dinner time, and family time. The next time you hear, "I'm bored!" or, "Can I play with your phone?" point them toward the checklist.

**CREATE A DEDICATED SPACE IN YOUR HOME FOR YOUR ELEMENTARY-SCHOOLER TO DO HOMEWORK/CLASSWORK.** It can be as simple as a special chair at your kitchen table with a placemat that only appears at homework time. Whatever it is, set it up with pencils, a sharpener, good lighting, and peace and quiet. Establishing healthy study routines early-on will help your kid now and in the phases to come.

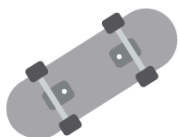
**SET ASIDE SOME TIME FOR A NIGHT OF CRAFTING.** Grab some cardstock and any craft supplies you have on-hand and create several bookmarks for your child to use throughout the school year. Spend your time together talking about the books you read (or didn't read!) and the friends you had in school growing up.

**GIVE SPACE FOR YOUR KIDS TO TALK ABOUT THEIR DAY.** Make sure to sit down and have dinner together as often as possible. Go around the table and have each person tell one high and one low from their day. Often times, kids will be most open to honest conversations when you tuck them in at night. Even when your kids are old enough to go to the bed on their own, try to keep a tucking-in ritual for as long as you can.

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# CREATING A NEW BACK TO SCHOOL RHYTHM

# MIDDLE SCHOOL

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*(\*Please note that many of these are transferable to other phases. Feel free to look through each list for additional ideas!)*

**BUY A "COMMUNICATION JOURNAL" FOR YOU AND YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLER TO SHARE THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR.** Start it off by writing them a note that tells them how proud you are of them, being specific and detailed. Invite them to use the journal to talk to you about anything they want during the upcoming year. Assure them of confidentiality, and set up a place you two can leave the journal when a new issue arises.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL IS A PHASE THAT'S ALL ABOUT HANGING OUT WITH FRIENDS.** You'll spend lots of time in the car driving them to the next friend-function—you may even feel like a chauffeur! Choose one drive a day and take advantage of the time by turning off the radio, tablets, and devices and ask questions. Keep it lighthearted—What's hot? What's not? What was the best thing that happened today? The worst?

**IDENTIFY ONE WAY YOU CAN MAKE BEDTIME MORE SIGNIFICANT FOR YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLER.** Whether it's reading a chapter together out of their favorite book, reviewing their homework together, or sharing funny memes or videos, those five minutes, invested over time, will create a rhythm of warmth and connection between you and your teen.

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# CREATING A NEW BACK TO SCHOOL RHYTHM

# HIGH SCHOOL

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*(\*Please note that many of these are transferable to other phases. Feel free to look through each list for additional ideas!)*

**ESTABLISH A ROUTINE THAT FOSTERS COMMUNITY INSIDE THE WALLS OF YOUR HOUSE.** Choose one night a week that's a non-negotiable "family night." Whether it's dinner at a local restaurant, baking everyone's favorite cookies, a nightly walk, or a board game, create and protect a touchpoint for you and your family that occurs regularly.

**EARLY IN THE SCHOOL YEAR, TAKE YOUR STUDENT TO THEIR FAVORITE RESTAURANT OR COFFEE SHOP** and ask them what their goals and plans are for the upcoming year. Help them create clear, measurable objectives for each goal—even going as far to create reminders on their phones or tablets to keep them on track.

**YOUR HIGH SCHOOLER IS GROWING UP—BUT THEY STILL NEED YOU.** Find a creative way to regularly encourage them and remind them that you're available. Set a reminder on your phone (for 1-2 times a week) to send them a purely encouraging text, email, or message.

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