
INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Education

TIPS TO MAKE BACK TO SCHOOL SUCCESSFUL FOR STUDENTS

VICTORIA – As families across British Columbia get ready for Sept. 8 when students and teachers head back to the classroom, here are some tips to help families prepare for the start of the new school year:

- Check what time your child's school starts; students in different grades may start at different times.
- Get your children used to the back-to-school routine before the first day of school by having them shift to their school bedtime and wake-up routine the week before school begins.

Parents play a key role during the school year by keeping their children safe and healthy. Here are some ways to achieve this:

- Make sure your children eat breakfast every day so their minds have the fuel they need for school.
- Keep nutritious snacks, like cut-up fruit and vegetables, cheese sticks, low-fat yogurt and butter-free popcorn on hand to make healthy lunches easier to put together.
- Schedule regular dental and any necessary medical checkups for your children.
- Ensure your children's backpacks are no more than 10 to 20 per cent of their bodyweight and that your children use both shoulder straps.
- Make sure your children know safe routes to and from school. Start a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train program in your neighbourhood, or find out how your children can join an existing one.

Students are often more successful in school when they develop good study habits early on. Parents can help their children study by:

- Setting up a homework area away from the television and with adequate supplies and lighting.
- Letting your children see you reading and setting aside time each day to read as a family.
- Keeping an assignment calendar on the fridge or bulletin board for quick reference of due dates, exams and other activities.

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BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

At School:

- Encourage children to use the water fountains at school, instead of relying on bottled water.
- Support your children to become active in an existing recycling club at school or to start one themselves.
- When shopping for school supplies, buy products that are reusable or have recyclable packaging, and reuse leftover school supplies from the previous school year.
- Recycle as much waste as possible and aim to produce waste-free lunches for your children by sending food in reusable containers and bags, and by avoiding pre-packaged and processed foods.

At Home:

- Clean waxed paper, plastic bags and tinfoil can be reused several times, and instead of including pre-packaged drinks in school lunches, a small thermos of cold milk or juice will cut down on unnecessary packaging.
- Buy good-quality, long-lasting products that can be handed down to younger children.
- Use cold water when washing clothing.
- Encourage children to take shorter showers using a restricted-flow shower head.
- Make sure children turn off taps when brushing their teeth instead of allowing a constant flow of water.

On the Road:

- Walk or cycle with your children to school instead of driving to reduce vehicle emissions.
- Join an existing Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train in your neighbourhood to get your children safely to school, or coordinate your own.
- Encourage your children to take public transit to school as often as possible or arrange a neighbourhood carpool.
- Join a car sharing co-operative for school commutes instead of owning a car.
- If you must drive children to school, incorporate short-distance errands in the trip so your engine stays warm.
- Maintain proper tire inflation, check your tires weekly, and schedule regular maintenance checks for your car.

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BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS FOR HEALTHY, ACTIVE STUDENTS

Primary Students:

- Include a variety of fruits and vegetables in your children's snacks and lunches every day.
- Have your children help pack their lunches, so they can learn to make healthy choices early on.
- Help your children learn about and understand Canada's Food Guide.
- Take family walks with your children and, if possible, walk them to school.
- Join or co-ordinate a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train to help your children get to school safely with adult supervision: www.hastebc.org/walking-school-busbicycletrain.
- Set up a regular teeth-brushing routine and ensure your children are brushing and flossing correctly.
- Introduce your children to active games they can play on their own, like hopscotch or jumping rope. When more children are around, introduce tag, soccer or baseball.

Intermediate/Middle Students:

- Whenever possible, encourage your children to walk, ride, rollerblade or skateboard to school instead of driving them.
- Suggest that your children take the dog for a walk before and after school.
- Continue to encourage healthy eating habits for your teenagers. Use Canada's Food Guide to plan healthy meals and snacks, as they have different nutritional needs from children and adults.
- Teach your children to eat less-nutritious foods – foods high in sugar, fat and sodium – in moderation, and help them learn to replace these foods with more nutritious snacks instead.

Secondary Students:

- Encourage your teenagers to get involved in intramural or after-school sports, and help them explore new physical activities.
- Suggest your teenagers take a class at the local community centre or encourage them to participate in a walking or hiking group.
- Place your older children in charge of some of the family's meals and grocery shopping so they learn how to buy, prepare and enjoy healthy meals using Canada's Food Guide.
- Encourage your teens to get plenty of rest to ensure they are alert and ready to learn at school.

All Students:

- Insist that your children eat breakfast every day, as it provides fuel for the brain to learn and helps them maintain a healthy weight.
- Keep nutritious foods, like cut-up vegetables and fruit, cheese sticks, low-fat yogurt and butter-free popcorn on hand to make healthy snacking easy.
- If your child has anaphylaxis, coordinate with the school principal on an updated emergency plan that best meets your child's needs.
- Schedule regular dental and any necessary medical checkups.
- Encourage your children to choose milk or water at meals instead of sugary drinks or pop.
- Get children active through sports, or go for nightly family walks or bike rides.

H1N1:

- The H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) is a type of influenza that causes respiratory disease that can spread between people.
- In most children, the symptoms of the H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) are similar to the symptoms of regular flu.
- Teach your children to wash their hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to cough and sneeze into a tissue or into the inside of their elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay at least two metres (six feet) away from people who are sick.
- Children who are sick should stay home from school and daycare and stay away from other people until they are better.

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BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS TO IMPROVE STUDYING, LITERACY

Primary Students:

- Let your children see you read, and set aside time each day for family reading.
- Ask your children to read to you while you prepare a meal.
- Get your children excited about reading by taking turns reading pages or acting out characters.
- Talk to your children about what they read. Ask them questions that require them to read between the lines and think about what they have just read. This will help improve their reading comprehension.
- Introduce your children to a variety of literary genres and see which one they most enjoy.
- Help your children get a library card and take weekly trips with them to the library.

Intermediate/Middle Students:

- Set up a daily homework routine. Designate a homework area away from distractions like the television and Internet, and with adequate lighting and supplies.
- When it is time for your children to do their homework, reinforce strong study habits by also doing yours: balance your chequebook, pay your bills or immerse yourself in a book.
- Help your children identify difficult and easy homework tasks and get them to tackle the most difficult subjects first.
- Make yourself available to answer questions and offer help, but do not do your children's homework for them.
- Ask your children questions and have them explain what they have just read or studied.
- Encourage your children to write stories and poetry.

Secondary Students:

- Continue with an established homework routine. Make adjustments as needed, such as after-school or weekend time set aside for working on big projects.
- Encourage your teenagers to take 20 minutes each night to read over their notes from that day or rewrite them using colours to highlight important information so they retain it longer.
- Have your children take a break every 10 minutes to help alleviate eye, neck and brain fatigue while studying. This will help them be more productive and retain more of what they read and study.
- Encourage your teenagers to explore magazines or appropriate websites on subjects that interest them to keep them reading. Most local libraries carry selections of magazines on a variety of topics, including sports, science, mechanics and politics.
- Keep an assignment calendar on the fridge for quick reference of due dates, exams and how they fit with other activities.

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BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS FOR A SMOOTH START

Primary Students:

- Confirm what time school will start on the first day.
- If your children are going to a new school, check with the school to see what information or identification will be required on registration day.
- Get your children used to the back-to-school routine before the first day of school by having them shift to their school bedtime and wake-up routine a week before school begins.
- Have your children choose their outfits the night before the first day to help start the morning calmly and efficiently.
- Meet your children's teachers and school principal. You can get valuable insight into how your children are doing in school by talking to school staff.
- Get involved in the school community. Contact your local board of education or the Parent Advisory Council at your child's school for volunteer opportunities.

Intermediate/Middle Students:

- Review your children's class schedules with them to ensure all of their classes are correct.
- Help your children figure out a plan for getting to class on time, especially if classes are at opposite ends of the building.
- If your children are going to a new school, encourage them to check out the school before their first day. Have them locate the gym, library, cafeteria and their classrooms to get them acquainted with the facilities.
- Talk to your children about the upcoming school year; be positive and remind them of the friends they will meet, the new things they will learn and the fun they will have.
- Continue to be involved in the school community as this is a great way to get to know your children's teachers and other parents.

Secondary Students:

- If your teenagers are going to a new school, have them arrange a visit to learn where to find their classrooms, the gym, the library and the cafeteria so they will feel more comfortable on their first day.
- Encourage your teenagers to review their schedules and make an appointment with a school counsellor if there are any conflicts or mistakes.
- Have them practise the combination on their locks to ensure they know the combination and that the locks work properly.
- Continue to be involved in the school community.

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BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS TO KEEP STUDENTS SAFE

All Students:

- Ensure your children always wear a helmet and other protective gear when playing sports, riding their bikes, using scooters or skateboarding. Ensure helmets fit properly and that your children secure the chin strap every time they go for a ride.

Primary Students:

- Find a safe route to and from school and practise it with your children.
- Join an existing Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train, or start up your own with other parents in your neighbourhood. Visit www.hastebc.org/walking-school-busbicycletrain for details.
- Identify safe places along the route, such as a friend's house, where your children can go if they encounter trouble.
- Discuss how to safely interact with strangers: www.safekidsbc.ca/parent_street_proofing.htm
- Ensure your children understand traffic safety, such as how to cross the street, board the school bus and what to do and whom to contact in the event of a natural disaster.
- If your child has anaphylaxis, coordinate with the school principal on an updated emergency plan that best meets your child's needs.

Intermediate/Middle Students:

- Help your children pack their backpacks, and ensure their backpacks weigh no more than 10 to 20 per cent of their body weight.
- Make sure your children use both shoulder straps when carrying their backpacks. Slinging a backpack over one shoulder can strain muscles and may even increase the curvature of their spines.
- Discuss your children's safe route to school and ensure it is still effective. Note any changes in safe stops, such as friends moving to or from the neighbourhood.
- Talk to your children about appropriate school behaviour, and remind them what to do and whom to talk to if they encounter bullying.
- Help your children understand how to safely use the Internet and how to protect their privacy.

Secondary Students:

- Talk to your teenagers about being safe drivers and passengers. Let them know it is okay to say "no" to getting into a car with someone they feel is an unsafe driver.
- Encourage your teens to talk to you about issues that are important to them, including peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, and healthy sexual decision making.
- Let your teenagers grow and help provide them with a sense of confidence. This is the best defence against peer pressure.

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