

# Shiny new school shoes - make the first day at school a breeze

Submitted by: Bojangle Communications

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Starting a new school can be an exciting new adventure or a terrifying nerve-wracking nail-biting experience. From toddler to teen, life is full of challenges and 'new' experiences and the natural reaction is for a child to retreat from the situation and look to a parent for reassurance.

How a child reacts to starting a new school depends on their character, their ability to handle change, whether friends will be joining with them, and how their parents behave. Sue Atkins, a parent coach, author and founder of Positive Parents Confident Kids (<http://www.positive-parents.com/menus/main.asp?QTopMenu=about%20us>), says: "A parent's attitude is of vital importance to the 'Big Day' experience. If a parent appears nervous, anxious, worried or over-protective, then the child will notice the tensions and react with anxiety, reluctance and hesitancy."

Sue Atkins (<http://www.positive-parents.com/menus/main.asp?QTopMenu=about%20us>) has some positive parenting pointers to help make the first day at school a breeze:

1. Talk to your child about what to expect – if the new school is a nursery or reception class, talk about what will happen during the day, such as snacks, milk-time, story or quiet time, the toys, or noise of the other children. If it is a secondary school, talk about the layout of the larger building, the new homework expectations, new friends, new timetable or the route home.
2. Take your child to school – with younger children, the place where they go to the toilet or hang their coat is of great importance to them – knowing where these are can really help them relax in the early days in a new environment. With older children, taking them to find the toilets might not make you very popular, but you can accompany them to school for a few days so they are confident about how to get to school.
3. It's OK to be nervous – let your child know that it's OK to be nervous and worried about being away from you. Get them to think about a familiar object or toy they could take with them for a short while until they get used to the changes.
4. Find a 'buddy' or special friend – your child may already know someone who will be in the same class, maybe they went to primary school with someone who is going to the same secondary school. Try and meet up a few times in the summer holiday
5. Make the daily breakfast routine relaxed – lay out school clothes or make the packed lunch the night before and get your child involved in helping with the process. This helps take away some of the anxiety and is an opportunity for listening and chatting through little or big niggles.

The first day won't be easy for everyone, so if a child does have difficulties Sue Atkins has a few survival tips which will work wonders:

1. Encourage older children to ask for help - if they don't understand the routine or where they are

supposed to be for classes, or aren't sure about what to do for their homework, then encourage them to realise that everyone is in the same boat.

2. Be firm about going to school – don't "give in" to staying at home as this sends the wrong message and really is making a rod for your own back!

3. Always pick up on time – it will make your child feel secure and safe knowing that you are waiting for them with a smile and a lovely greeting. With older children don't bombard them with questions like: "Well, how was it?" when they get home. Let them relax and talk about their day in their own time - just greet them with a smile and an "It's good to see you".

4. Always reassure and be accepting of your child's feelings – acknowledge your child's feelings as it shows respect to their genuine emotions and gives you an opportunity to help them learn to cope with new experiences positively.

5. Stay positive and be relaxed – if your child reverts to thumb sucking, bedwetting becomes clingy, or has nightmares, these behaviours are usually only temporary setbacks.

Starting at secondary school can be just as daunting an experience as starting at primary school. Sue Atkins suggests: "Encourage your child to see their school as a 'Human Zoo' and not necessarily a 'Wild Jungle'. It is a place with lots of interesting animals and the zookeepers (teachers) are there to help them - not to contain them!"

Remember that you are creating a blueprint for how your child handles change throughout their lives. With a parent's patience, understanding and love the first day at school will be a rewarding and positive experience.

ENDS

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Notes to Editors:

1. To find out what sort of parent you are, take the Positive Parents Confident Kids parenting quiz (<http://www.positive-parents.com/menus/main.asp?QTopMenu=home&QSubMenu=Parenting%20Quiz&QOptionItem=blank>) – it only takes a few minutes

2. Sue Atkins' is a parenting coach and her company is Positive Parents Confident Kids ([www.positive-parents.com](http://www.positive-parents.com)), Sue is a former Deputy Head with 22 years teaching experience and is an NLP Master Practitioner and Trainer. Positive Parents works with parents (<http://www.positive-parents.com/menus/main.asp?QTopMenu=what%20we%20offer>) to improve or hone their parenting skills, via one-to-one coaching, workshops and seminars. Sue's favourite phrase is "because

kids don't come with a handbook".

3. For more about Sue's work and to receive her free monthly newsletter of practical tips and helpful advice for bringing up happy, confident, well-balanced children go to her website:  
[www.positive-parents.com](http://www.positive-parents.com)

