



The Mind Hub

By



Topic: Transitioning Back to School After the Winter Break

The holiday season is a time for family, fun, and rest, but the return to school after a long winter break can sometimes be challenging for both students and parents. Whether your child is excited to get back to learning or feeling a bit anxious about returning to school, it's normal for them to experience some adjustments. This month, we'll explore strategies to help your child transition smoothly back into their school routine and set the tone for a successful start to the new year.

❖ **Why Can Transitioning Back to School Be Tough?**

After several weeks of relaxation, late nights, and no schoolwork, many students find it difficult to return to the structure of the school day. Some may feel anxious about catching up on missed lessons, upcoming exams, reconnecting with friends, or adjusting back to earlier bedtimes and a busy schedule. Others may simply need time to re-adjust to the expectations of school life. It's important to recognize that these feelings are completely normal, and with a little preparation and patience, students can successfully transition back to school.

❖ **Tips for a Smooth Transition**

➤ **Ease Back into a Routine Before School Starts**

Gradually Adjust Bedtimes: The transition from late nights and sleeping in to earlier wake-up times can be one of the toughest parts of returning to school. About 3-5 days before school starts, begin shifting your child's bedtime earlier by 15-30 minutes each night. This will help them get back into the habit of waking up refreshed and ready for school.

Re-establish Morning and After-School Routines: Start to reintroduce school-day routines a few days before returning—such as packing school bags, preparing lunch, and setting aside

time for homework. This will help ease the transition and make the first day back less overwhelming.

➤ **Talk About Expectations and Emotions**

Acknowledge Their Feelings: It's common for kids to have mixed emotions about going back to school. Some might feel excited, while others may be anxious or sad about leaving the comfort of home. Have an open conversation with your child about how they're feeling, and reassure them that it's okay to have these emotions.

Discuss the Upcoming Weeks: Help your child understand what's ahead, such as new lessons, projects, or events. Setting realistic expectations about the first few days can help reduce any anxiety about the unknown. You might say, "The first day back will be a bit of a review, so there's no need to worry about getting behind."

➤ **Create a Positive and Calm Environment**

Start the Day with a Calm Routine: Mornings can be stressful, so aim for a calm start. Consider adding activities like reading together, eating a healthy breakfast, or doing a short meditation to help your child start the day with a sense of peace.

Encourage Breaks and Downtime: After a day of school, children may feel mentally and physically exhausted. Encourage relaxation activities like reading, playing outside, or doing a fun family activity to unwind after school. Balancing work and rest is important for re-adjusting to the school routine.

➤ **Set Small, Achievable Goals**

Focus on Positive Reinforcement: After a long break, students may feel overwhelmed by schoolwork or the expectations ahead. Help your child set small, achievable goals for the first few weeks back, such as "finish all my homework by 5 PM" or "participate in class discussion at least once each day." Celebrate progress and effort, not just results.

Be Patient with Mistakes: If your child struggles with readjusting to their schoolwork, remind them that it's okay to make mistakes. Learning is a process, and they are likely to get back into the groove of schoolwork after a bit of practice.

➤ **Reconnect with Friends and Social Support**

Rebuild Social Connections: After being away from school for a while, kids might need a little help reconnecting with their friends. Encourage social activities such as playdates, group projects, or simply talking about friends and school experiences. Sometimes just talking about who they'll see at school or sharing fun memories from the break can help your child feel more connected.

Address Social Concerns: If your child feels anxious about socializing or reconnecting with peers, offer reassurance and practice conversations or social skills at home. Let them know that it's normal to feel nervous, but that their friends are excited to see them too.

❖ **FAQs**

1. *Q. My child seems anxious about going back to school. What should I do?*

A. It's natural for some children to feel anxious about returning to school after a long break. Acknowledge their feelings and validate their concerns. You can say things like, "It's normal to feel nervous after time off, but you've got this!" Help them feel prepared by talking about what to expect on the first day back, and remind them that they'll have time to adjust to their routine. If their anxiety persists, it may help to establish a regular "calm-down" time after school where they can talk or relax.

2. *Q. How can I help my child get back into a school-focused mindset?*

A. One way to transition back into a school mindset is to gradually shift away from "vacation mode" before school starts. Have conversations about school in

a positive light—talk about things they’re excited to learn about, upcoming events, or fun aspects of school life. Consider setting up a “homework station” or re-organizing their school supplies to help them reconnect with the structure of school.

3. *Q. My child is struggling to stay organized after the break. What can I do?*
 - A. Many students may need help re-establishing organizational habits after a long break. You can support your child by helping them organize their school supplies, set up a dedicated study space, and develop a homework routine. If they’re overwhelmed by assignments or materials, work with them to break tasks into smaller, manageable steps. Use tools like planners or checklists to keep track of assignments, and offer positive reinforcement for staying organized.
4. *Q. How do I help my child adjust to the social aspects of school after being off for so long?*
 - A. Reconnecting socially can be a challenge after a long break, especially if kids have been isolated during the holidays. Start by discussing any concerns your child may have about their friendships or school interactions. You can practice social skills together by role-playing conversations or discussing how to approach certain social situations. Encourage your child to reach out to friends and plan social activities after school to help rebuild those connections.
5. *Q. What if my child is having trouble focusing after the break?*
 - A. It’s common for kids to have difficulty focusing after a long break. To help improve focus, establish a consistent after-school routine that includes breaks for relaxation and activities they enjoy. Encourage short study sessions with breaks in between, and make sure they have a quiet, distraction-free space to

work. It may also help to gently remind your child to take their time with assignments rather than rushing through them.

❖ **Final Thoughts.**

Returning to school after winter break can be an adjustment, but with the right strategies, your child will be able to ease back into their routine. By creating a calm environment, setting realistic expectations, and offering support when needed, you can help your child feel confident and ready for the challenges and opportunities of the new year. The key is patience and preparation—both for you and your child!

Wishing you and your family a smooth and successful start to the new year!

If you have any concerns about your child's stress levels or would like further resources, don't hesitate to reach out to the school psychologist.

- The Mind Hub, by Marina Stavrou

