

Back-to-School Guide



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READY FOR SCHOOL CHECKLIST
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When kids are first learning how to get ready for school, it's easy for them to forget a few things. They'll be able to remember better if they draw a picture of themselves and write down what they need to do before they leave. Post it somewhere they're sure to see it, such as by the front door.



BROWN-BAG LUNCHES

If you pack a lunch for your kids, here are some things you can do to get them interested in it and to get them the nutrition they need:

1. Start with the lunch box. Even small children have distinct preferences about what they want to carry; a child happy with her lunch box is one step closer to being happy with her lunch. Flexible, insulated versions are easy to clean and will conform to what's inside. Some lunch boxes have a mesh insert to hold an ice pack, which may be essential, depending on what you're serving. A worthy substitute is a frozen juice box, which melts just enough by lunchtime.
2. Pack a balanced meal. What to include? The goal, says Mark Corkins, M.D., assistant professor of pediatrics and pediatric gastroenterology at Riley's Children's Hospital at Indiana University in Indianapolis, and president of the Indiana Chapter of the Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition, is to pack a protein, a grain, and a fruit or vegetable. Dessert should not be an everyday item, he says, and milk or a juice with no additives are the ideal drinks.
3. Think about presentation when selecting and preparing foods. Pickles, cherry tomatoes, and carrot and celery sticks have fun shapes, colors, and textures. You can make a sandwich more appealing by decorating the wrapping with a sticker or by cutting the sandwich with a cookie cutter. Prepackaged wholesome snacks such as fruit cups and yogurt are fun to eat, as is anything that crackles or crunches.
4. Get kids to participate. "Let your child take part in packing his lunch," suggests Mel Heyman, M.D., chief of gastroenterology and nutrition at the University of California in San Francisco. "If you keep lots of healthy food in the house," he says, "then just give him free rein."
5. Don't overpack. Too much food can be, well, too much. "There's this mind-set that children are supposed to clean their plates," says Corkins. "If they tend to eat half a sandwich, then just send half a sandwich. That way they won't feel the pressure to eat more than they need."
6. Find out what other parents are sending to school. The calamari salad that, for some reason, your 6-year-old happily eats at home might not have the same appeal when scrutinized by the critical mass of her kindergarten classmates. If peer pressure is a big issue, Elizabeth St. Clair, a mother in New York City, offers this ingenious solution: To please her daughter Isabelle, she asks the mother of one of Isabelle's close friends what she is sending and then tries to mimic it. "This cuts off the charge of 'Maxine's mother sends better lunches than you do.' Instead, I hear, 'Maxine and I were twins at lunch today.'"
7. Include a few surprises. Think of the lunch you pack as your child's one connection to home during the day. Let her find a new pencil, key chain, or a few stickers, something totally unexpected. Personal notes and inedible treats are big hits because they remind kids that parents are thinking of them during the school day. You can also include labels on food as your child is learning to read.

CAFETERIA LUNCHES

The quality of cafeteria food varies greatly throughout the country—“and even within a single school district,” says Mel Heyman. “Sometimes the people who make the food are not oriented to health, and then there’s the challenge of serving so many kids so quickly.”

If you’re not happy with the lunches that are served at your child’s school, here are steps you can take:

1. Pack a lunch. The easiest solution, of course, is to send food from home instead. If a lunch from home is too mortifying a prospect for your child, however, peer pressure may render the nutritional trade-off worthless. Another option is to send along a nutritional complement to the meal.
2. Get involved. Urge the school to improve standards. Start by calling the principal. If you have no luck there, try the superintendent or the board of education members. Some schools have nutritionists in charge of the cafeteria whom you can contact.
3. Do damage control with what you serve at home. Many school lunch menus are sent home. “Some are even posted on the Internet,” Corkins points out, “so you can monitor what your child is eating for lunch and plan dinner accordingly, thus avoiding pasta twice in a day.”
4. Look at the big picture, suggests Corkins, “not meal by meal but day by day, even week by week.” Habits are formed at home, and setting a good example is key. Keep in mind, however, that the best lunch in the world might not get eaten on a given day, so don’t fret over each meal. Good nutrition occurs over time.



SEARCH OUR ONLINE
RECIPE FINDER
FOR LUNCH IDEAS AND RECIPES KIDS WILL LOVE

WWW.MARTHASTEWART.COM/RECIPES

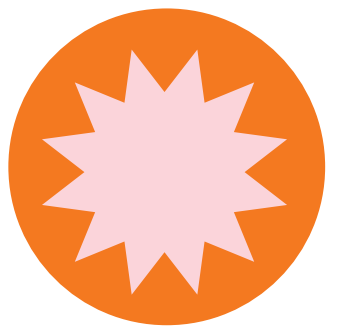
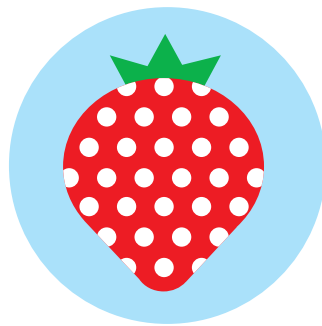
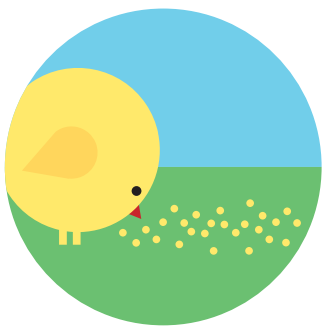
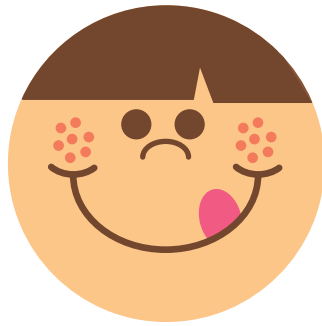
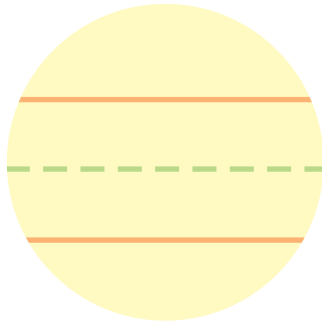
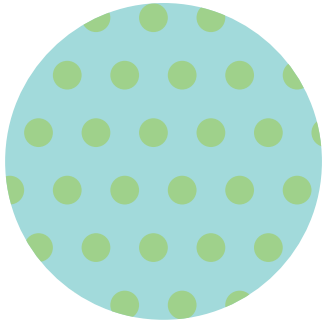
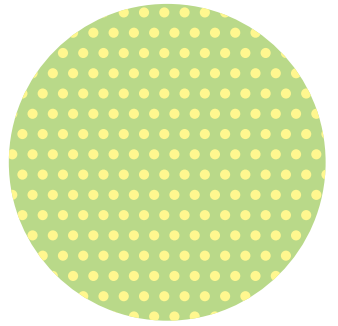
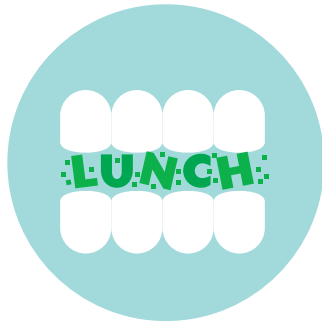
CLIP-ART CRAFT: BROWN BAG LABELS

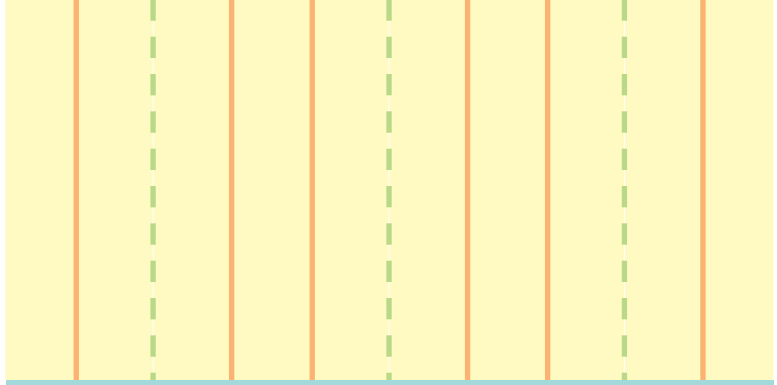
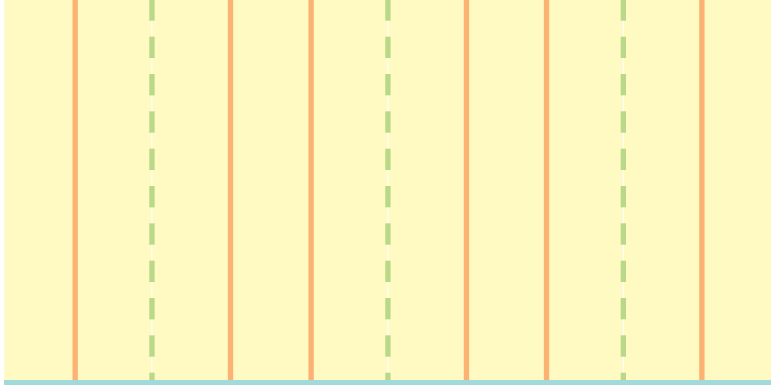
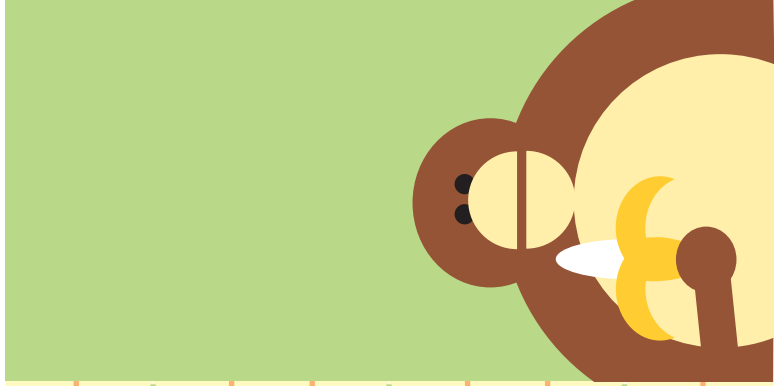
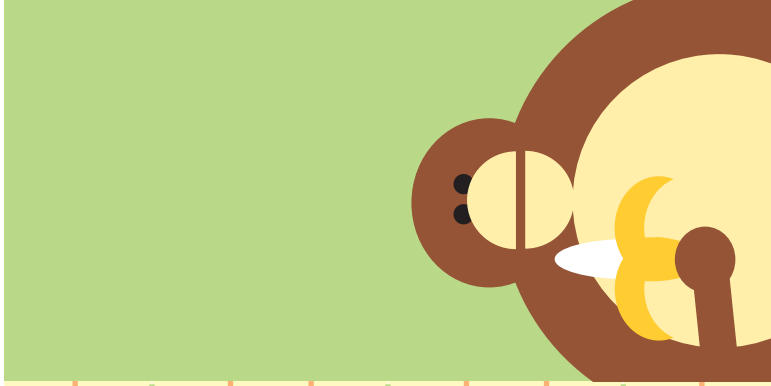
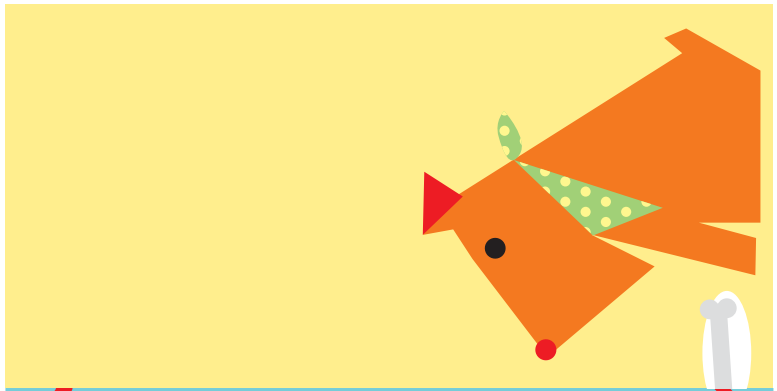
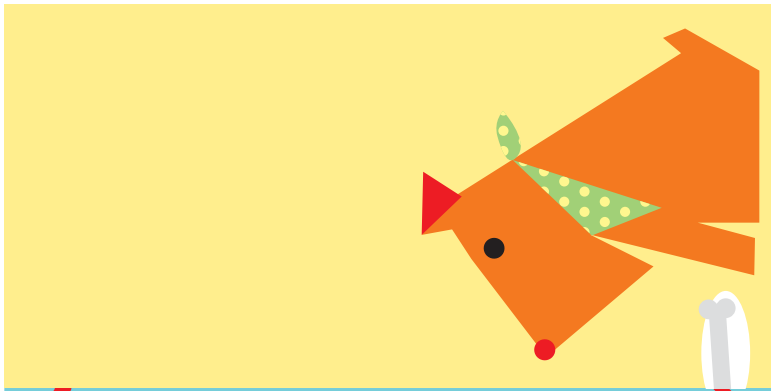
Make lunchtime even more appetizing by decorating kids' lunch bags with cheery stickers and labels. Some can serve a purpose—personalizing plain containers or sealing sacks shut—others are purely for fun. And they're quick and simple to make with a computer and printer, a scanner, or a color copier, plus easy-to-find supplies. Download or copy our designs, or create your own.

It's easy to accessorize paper lunch bags. Photocopy or print designs onto precut stickers, or print onto sheets of sticker paper and cut out. Affix to a lunch bag for a fun midday surprise. Use our rectangular labels to seal bags closed. Download them, print onto white sticker paper, and cut out labels. Or print directly onto white 2" x 4" mailing labels (Avery Label #8253). Use our round labels to add extra "flavor." Download them, print onto white sticker paper, and cut out labels. Or print directly onto 1 1/2 "round stickers (Avery Label #8293).

When Using with Avery Labels: Be sure to check your printer settings before printing onto precut stickers. The templates will work best if the printer is not set to shrink or expand the PDF to fit the page. The wording for this may vary slightly according to the type of printer you use.







PRINTABLE LUNCH CHART

Kids may be more likely to eat their lunch if they help choose the menu; when she uses this magnetic chart to map out their meals for the week, it saves time and helps make grocery shopping easier. Just download and print the magnetic chart onto one full-size magnet sheet. Then print the food name labels onto a second magnetic sheet and cut out. Together come up with a variety of sandwiches, fruits, healthy snacks, and desserts; print them out and let the child fill in the blanks.

How to Scan: Kids can scan their own designs. For items that are curved, such as marbles or carrots, lay a piece of paper over them before scanning; they will show up better. Print the scanned image on regular paper until it looks just the way you want (a parent can adjust contrast or brightness if necessary). Then print it out on the label. If scanning food, be sure to clean the scanner when you're done.

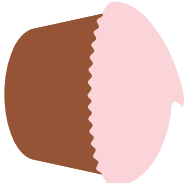

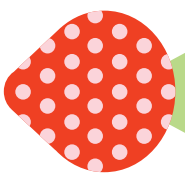



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PRINTABLE LUNCH CHART
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FOOD NAME LABELS HOW-TO

Click on each box below, and type your child's favorite foods directly into our template. Type up to 2 lines, 13 characters per line in each box. Print out the boxes on another magnet sheet. (You can also print out the blank template onto regular printer paper, and in the food names in permanent marker.) Cut out the rectangles, and use them along with our chart to plan your child's lunches.

what's for lunch?

			
<p>M</p> <p>TU</p> <p>W</p> <p>TH</p> <p>F</p>			

FOLDER BOOK ORGANIZER

Kids will feel proud going back to school with supplies they've made themselves. For a multisubject organizer, tape several double-pocket folders together with wide tape. Line up the spines of two, and tape; add others one at a time. Finish by taping the book's spine. Use peel-off stickers and label each subject.



STARTING KINDERGARTEN

Q: My 5-year-old son doesn't like change and is scared by the prospect of starting school. How can I make this easier for him?

A: Every child adjusts to new experiences at his or her own pace. At 5 years of age, some kids are thrilled by the idea of attending kindergarten, especially if they have older siblings they look up to or if they are already comfortable with the routine of preschool. However, it is also very common for a child to express anxiety about school, particularly if he hasn't spent a lot of time away from Mom and Dad. The best thing you can do for your child is to arm him with the basic knowledge he will need to get through the first few days with confidence. The American School Counselor Association and the U.S. Department of Education both recommend that before the first day of school parents familiarize their children with the routines they will have to follow. You and your son can walk or drive the route to and from the school, pointing out landmarks he'll remember.

Also, visit the teacher and classroom ahead of time, if possible. Many kindergartens offer an orientation day; if yours doesn't, call and request a visit. Show your child where he will hang his coat, where he will sit, and where the bathroom is—a very reassuring piece of knowledge for a timid 5-year-old. Other aspects of the new routine are worth rehearsing as well, such as eating a snack or lunch that has been packed in a lunchbox and getting up early. If he doesn't already know how, this is a good time to teach your child to dress himself. Being able to tie his shoes and zip his jacket and pants without help from the teacher will build his self esteem and eliminate unnecessary stress.

As the first day approaches, be sure your own attitude is positive. Try to get excited about this new step—maybe even have a “beginning of school” dinner the night before school starts.

Finally, accompany your child to his kindergarten on the first day. Walk him to the classroom, and maybe even, with the teacher's approval, wait—quietly—at the back of the room for a while as he adjusts. Tell him in advance that you won't be staying long. When it is time to go, say good-bye cheerfully and confidently and reassure him that you will see him at the end of the day.

DO YOU KNOW?

Since the 1970s, school busses have been painted yellow with black stripes to ensure visibility; yellow is the color that provides the most striking contrast to black.

LETTING KIDS CHOOSE CLOTHES

Q: Sometimes my 9-year-old daughter wants to wear clothes to school that I think are inappropriate. How much leeway should I give her to pick her outfits?

A: Clothes are a great place to give kids a sense of independence and control, says Joshua Sparrow, M.D., a child psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School and coauthor of “Discipline: The Brazelton Way” (Perseus, 2003). But they can also be a source of strife as kids grow and test their independence. Ideally, teaching a child how to make good clothing decisions begins when she is quite young. A parent of a 3-year-old can already begin giving her daughter limited options: setting out two outfits from which she can choose, for example. By the time a child is in elementary school, she can select her own outfits from the closet. A kid this age wants a sense of autonomy, so position yourself as a guide. If she seems uncertain or is having trouble getting dressed, offer to help.

As children grow into preteens, they may begin to dress in ways that parents feel are improper and may at the same time become upset with parents who discipline them about their choices. The peer group and its rules are beginning to become all-important. “Developmentally, a 9-year-old is looking forward to adolescence, yet is also anxious about it; the parent, meanwhile, is worried about losing control,” says Sparrow. “You don’t really have control over what the kid will wear: She may pack a miniskirt in her backpack and change at school, out of your sight. So the thing to do is to work toward being on the same side so that she won’t shut you out. Let your daughter know that you want her to express herself and that you’re comfortable with her growing independence.

In general, Sparrow says, try to not be too controlling about outfits. Clothes are probably not going to cause a lot of harm, so be as relaxed as you can, which will also help your relationship with your daughter. But what do you do when she appears in the morning wearing a midriff-baring tank top or a skirt that’s too short? “Tell her, ‘You look great, you look gorgeous. And what do you think this outfit says to other people?’” suggests Sparrow. Point out that while she has control over the clothes she wears, she doesn’t have control over how others will respond.

Also ask what her goals are for how her teachers will feel about the way she’s dressing. Additionally, you can have a hand in what your daughter’s peer group is doing by talking to her friends’ parents and establishing a consensus about what your limits are. “Kids are going to give you a hard time: That’s their job,” says Sparrow. “But if you take the right approach, adolescence can be a lot of fun.”

DO YOU KNOW?

Kindergarten, developed in the 1830s, once was organized into twenty activities, including drawing, pricking, folding, parquetry, and sculpture, intended to help tots understand natural harmony.