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By Carol Fullington

## Back to school strategies

It takes one week of summer to completely undo nine months of consistency in bed, bath and mealtimes. What mother hasn't played out the bedtime drama more than once or twice? Now that the fireworks are over and the list is out — the list of necessary school supplies that is — how do you get back to the school routine?

Local moms and companies that specialize in organization offered these tips to get back on schedule without being overwhelmed by the messages those giant bins of school supplies are sending.

### Capitalize on the excitement

When the kids see the big bins of pencils and crayons and the fancy new backpacks, most are eager to get their new gear. As soon as the list is released, let the kids get all their shiny new school supplies, said Jennifer Hall of Orleans.

"I buy their school supplies early so they are not picked over, and I don't have to go 30 places the weekend before school to get everything on the list," she said.

Moms can also build enthusiasm by talking about seeing old friends, meeting new ones, and all the school activities they enjoy.

### Start the transition

Several local moms suggested slowly reintroducing bedtimes, wake-up schedules and regular mealtimes a few weeks before school. (Some said they never let them get off schedule in the first place.) It's also important to curtail screen time now, so kids get back in the habit of getting up, dressed and fed before turning on their coma-inducing technologies.

### Verify child care

Make certain that previous arrangements are still in place for younger children and that before/after school arrangements are clarified, suggests Web site [www.sittercity.com](http://www.sittercity.com).

### Go through the closets

First, check to see that clothes still fit, whether or not you need to buy new gym shoes, and to just clean it up. It may be a long time before you have an opportunity to weed things out once school starts, Hall said.

### Prepare a place to study

Kids need a place that is homework-ready, a cleared table, (preferably away from the TV) with pencils, erasers, rulers, etc., that are at their fingertips.

Hall stated, "As soon as we come in the house from school, my boys sit at the kitchen table to do their homework while I cook dinner. That way I am there to help if they need it, and they know they can't do anything else until their homework is finished."

### Organize daily necessities

Create an area where shoes, backpacks and extra-curricular gear are readily accessible every day, so the kids know exactly where to keep their things and find them in their morning rush, suggests cleaning product company Weiman Products.

## **Spread the load**

If kids are getting older and are ready to help with some of the daily/weekly responsibilities around the house, charge them with feeding the pets or packing their own lunches.

Julie Osborn of Paoli has her kids prepare their own lunches. She designates one cabinet in her kitchen specifically for those supplies. It is great for their lunch boxes, snack bags and plastic utensils, but it can also store a variety of prepackaged lunch options like peanut butter crackers and granola bars. "I have a drawer in my refrigerator I stock on Sundays with snack bags of healthy snacks like carrots and things for them to make their own sandwiches," she added.

## **Schedule appointments**

Call early for haircuts and check-ups for eyes and teeth. Destiny Bush of Mitchell suggested, "I schedule all their well check-ups in the summer. Sometimes it seems like we go from appointment to appointment, but I do not want to pull them out of school."

Contact your doctor's office to ensure your child has his or her necessary immunizations. A complete list of required vaccinations can be found at [www.in.gov/isdh/files/SchoolReqs2007.pdf](http://www.in.gov/isdh/files/SchoolReqs2007.pdf).

## **Tend to the taxi**

It's hard enough to find time to keep the general maintenance up, like having the oil changed, but take time before school starts to clean out your vehicle, stock the glove box and change your wiper blades, suggests cleaning company Weiman Products.

## **One last hoorah**

Give the kids something to talk about, suggests Web site [www.more4kids.info](http://www.more4kids.info). Let each of them plan one thing they would like to do before summer is over and give them an opportunity to do it.

Make the last few weeks of summer a fun time as you slowly ease back to the grind.