Tips for smooth return to school

Getting the kids ready for starting school or moving up a year can be daunting after the long summer holidays, but a little bit of forward planning can help you and your kids sail smoothly and calmly into the new school year. Here, Jennifer Shipway, school teacher, mum of six and owner of popular Instagram site, 'Where Learning Meets Play', shares her top tips to guide you:

1. **Make a list** – carefully make a list of all the items recommended by the school that you don't already have. If you keep the list with you, it's easy to pick a few items up as you are shopping for other things so it's less overwhelming. Buy extra stationery and keep it in an easily accessible basket, so there are always items on hand when you need them.
2. **Start early** – purchase necessary items early as leaving shopping to the last minute may mean shoe sizes are unavailable or the raincoat you need is challenging to find. The night before school, pack extra clothes. Include socks and underwear, just in case – you never know!
3. **Set the scene** – read books about starting school, in a casual way, giving your child a chance to ask questions if they want to. Reading books together every day is a great way to encourage early literacy skills.
4. **Dress rehearsal** –depending on how old they are, encourage your child to dress themselves in the months leading up to school. Ensure you have their uniforms ready to go well in advance in case of emergency or disaster (rips, tears, hungry dogs). Practice packing a healthy, simple lunch together with minimal packaging.
5. **Label everything** –every single thing! Even socks and inside shoes. Choose a good permanent marker. Keep one in a drawer in the kitchen so you can label new items and drink bottles after they have been washed.

Mum and primary school teacher Jennifer Shipway has ten tips for helping your kids get ready for school. (iStock)

6. **Shop wisely** – make sure you buy a lunch box and drink bottle that are easy to clean. It's important that your kids can easily operate these themselves and the drink bottle doesn't spill easily.
7. **Sleep routine** – as the holiday comes to a close, make sure there is a calm and predictable bedtime routine in place, as kids will be extra tired once they start school.

Jennifer Shipway has more than 20 years of experience as a primary school teacher, and is a mum of six children aged from four to 17. She runs a popular Instagram page, 'Where Learning Meets Play' , which has over 248,000 followers. For more information on stationery, pens and resources, visit: www.pilotpen.com.au.