

# UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE'S COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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## BACK TO SCHOOL

September is a crisp, exciting time for many of us. It's a time of new beginnings and is often more the start of the "new year" than January 1. It's a good time to think about how your life at home "works" for you and your family.

You can eliminate many hassles if you think through the ways you can build a "support system" at home so that your children can make the most of their school year. Here are some things to think about.



### Are Everyone's Clothes Ready For School?

**Every time we face a new situation, our clothes become especially important to us.**

Putting our best foot forward is a way of doing our best to create a positive impression on others and feel good about ourselves.

**Help your children choose clothes that will make them feel good about themselves.**

Sturdy, easy-care, mix-and-match clothes are often smart buys. Many kids like to pick their own clothes for the day. If the clothes are mix and match — most of their choices will look great. To save money, try to buy no more clothing than is needed at one time. Then you will be able to purchase a new item now and then to add interest and spark. Looking good and feeling good in the clothes you are wearing can help you act your best.

### Can You Make It Easier to Get Good, Healthy Meals For Everyone?

- Are the children helping with meal preparation and cleanup?
- Fix a week's worth of healthy meals that are quick to fix. You may be able to use some of the ideas listed below, or modify them to suit your family's taste and budget.
- Good healthy breakfasts that will give everyone the go-power to make it until lunch don't need to be a lot of work.
  - **Some breakfast and lunch ideas:**

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- Oatmeal — instant or regular — with raisins or chopped apple.
- Cheese melted on warm bread, muffin, or roll.
- Peanut butter on toast.
- Warm soup.
- Milkshake or smoothie with lowfat milk and fruit.
- Yogurt, fruited or plain.
- Warm or cold leftovers — like macaroni and cheese or pizza.
- Add: Fruit or juice. Or a glass of milk.

### **Do You Have A System That Works For You?**

**Morning hours are pressure points for nearly everyone.**

- Night baths or showers will often give bathrooms more "elasticity" in the busy morning hours.
- If people choose their clothes the night before, they can get dressed quicker in the morning.

**When you reach those times in the day when you are too tired, don't feel guilty about not being the "perfect parent."**

- None of us are. Tell your child about your lack of energy and your need to have some time to relax before you can get back to moving again.

**Find a routine that works for you.**

- Children thrive on routines. They like knowing what is expected of them. A lot of hassles are eliminated when you don't have to have daily arguments about what time to go to bed, etc.
- Set regular times for family meals, snacks and bedtimes.
- Routines take a lot of the stress and "chaos" away. Things can be calmer and more relaxed.

### **Is Everyone Getting A Good Dose Of "Quality Time" Each Day?**

**It is not the quantity of time that you spend with your child, but the quality of time that really makes the difference.**

- Family fun times are like "family glue" Happy family meals make kids feel loved and connected.
- When you eat together:
  - Have kids help choose and prepare foods
  - Use this time to talk with your child. Share experiences. Accent the positive. Your child will learn key social skills—like talking and



listening.

- Enjoy each other's company. Avoid complaining and criticizing.
- Make the most of the time you spend with your children by:
  - Talking and listening with your full attention
  - Sitting or standing near each other
  - Keeping eye contact
  - Touching
- Don't miss chances to be close to your children in warm and loving ways.

## **Being active makes everyone feel good—and our brains work better!**

### **Help everyone find physical activity they can enjoy every day.**

- Build activity into your routines with family chores and family walks.
- Think up ways to have active family fun.



### **Limit screen time for everyone in the family to less than 2 hours a day.**

- Avoid screen time for children under 2.
- No TVs or computers in bedrooms.
- Make it "hard" to turn on the TV and easy and fun to move.

### **Limit children's exposure to advertising.**

- Children will want what is advertised — whether it is healthy or not.

## **10 tricks for getting the family up and out in the morning**

1. Give each child his or her own alarm clock. Set the clocks for the little ones and show the older ones how to do it themselves.
2. Play loud, cheerful music about ten minutes after all the alarms should have gone off.
3. Wake up half an hour earlier than the rest of the family so that your morning can be less hectic.
4. Stagger wake-up times if there is only one bathroom.
5. Prepare quick and easy breakfasts.
6. Do whatever you can the night before — set the breakfast table, prepare lunch foods, arrange who needs rides where.
7. Make a "launching pad" near the door where family members can place their books and other items to be taken to work or school. Get everyone in the habit of checking the launching pad before leaving the house.
8. Keep all daily supplies (such as toothbrush and tooth paste, soap, washcloth and towel, mirror, comb and brush) where the children can reach them easily.
9. Have each child make a list of the things he or she has to do every morning. The list might include: Make bed, pack lunch, feed dog.
10. When it's time for the first person in the family to leave each morning, call a quick family huddle at the "launching pad," have a group hug and wish everyone a good day. It's a great way to get launched each day!



This page was adapted from an article in Woman's Day.

Have a good month!

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