

[IMAGE]

School's Back in Session (Here's How to Survive It)

By Editorial Staff

Depending on where you live, the school year's just begun or is right around the corner. Yes, another year of learning and growth for the entire family – a point often overshadowed by what many consider a patience-testing, stress-magnifying nine-plus months. Fortunately, simple strategies can streamline the school year and help you keep your sanity through it all. Here are five to consider:

Lesson #1: A Little Preparation Goes a Long Way. The key to surviving the school year is preparation, and plenty of it. Just as it's important to prepare for a big test, not just cram the night before, you need to prepare in advance for each school week – and then each successive school day – so you aren't running around with your head cut off. *Test Tip:* Spend Sunday night prepping meals for the entire week, including school lunches, snacks and dinners. Every night, get food, clothes, etc., in order so when morning comes, it's (fairly) smooth sailing.

Lesson #2: Enlist an Army of Helpers. By the way, when you're doing all that weekly and nightly preparation, why not enlist the rest of the family – from the youngest child to the oldest – to help? Teaching moments aren't just that; they also help get things done by expanding the pool of people who can chip in. *Test Tip:* From food preparation to picking out clothes, teach your children the value of working together and making things easier, not harder.

school kids - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark *Lesson #3: Stick to the Schedule.* During the school year, a schedule is absolutely vital to survival. Drop-off and pick-up times, homework priorities, bath scheduling – try to wing it and you'll end up walking the stress plank day after day. *Test Tip:* Post a daily / weekly schedule in a prominent location. Cross off events / responsibilities as they're completed. For adults, keep a version on your smartphone, and teach phone-enabled children to do the same.

Lesson #4: Celebrate the Small Stuff. The school year is all about routine, which can weigh even the best of us down. Day after day of get ready for school, go to school, come home from school, go to practice, come home from practice, do homework, etc., can be mind-numbing. How can you break the monotony? By celebrating the small stuff. *Test Tip:* In the midst of the madness, take time to celebrate a good grade, a great

day, and all manner of "trivial" accomplishments by the family. You all deserve it – and they're not trivial at all!

Lesson #5: Make Vacation Days Count. You've finally hit your first day without school, whether because of a teacher planning day or a national holiday. What to do? For many people, the first thought is, let's do *nothing*! A day without a plan has its benefits, but with so much going on every other day, why waste it?

Test Tip: Whether a trip to the local amusement park, a casual lunch or a movie, make your days off count. You've all been working so hard – give yourself the reward you deserve and motivate everyone to make it to the next vacation day alive and well.

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