

# Preparing for the New School Year! [thechildcareconsultinggroup.com](http://thechildcareconsultinggroup.com)

Even though we work year 'round, we need to recognize and prepare for the start of each new school year. Here are a dozen ideas to get you started.

First, prepare yourself by remembering that the children who are coming into your classroom are a whole year younger than the group that is leaving you. You need to step back and readjust your expectations. Take things a little slower and get ready to repeat, repeat, repeat!

Prepare a place for each child to place his/her things, label with names plus a few extra left blank for last minute enrollees so you can quickly write their name on it and make them feel like they belong.

Think about your procedures for arrival and departure. How will you greet each child (and his/her parents) so each one feels welcome and glad to be in your classroom? What will you say to them as they leave that will make them and their parents feel appreciated and cared for? What will the children be doing so you have time to do this?

Make an attractive "rules" poster and hang it at child's eye level near your Circle Time area. There are so many positive, cute ideas on Pinterest. Please take a few minutes and pick one to duplicate for your classroom. And remember to add the phrase "and help my friends do it, too!" to the end of each rule. Ask the children, "How can you help your friends follow the rules? By telling them? No! That's bossy. You do it by showing them! That's what good friends do."



Procedures. Figure out exactly what you want kids to do, and how to communicate those expectations to them. The more specific you are, the less room there will be for children push the limits of what is acceptable. How do the children determine where they can play? (Color groups? Popsicle sticks with photos on them? Center tags?) What do they do if they need a drink of water or a trip to the bathroom? How many children can be in the bathroom at the same time? What is the hand washing procedure? What do they do after they finish cleaning at clean up time? What about lunch time? Are the first ten minutes "Quiet Time" listening to classical music so everyone has a chance to eat and begin to gear down for nap time? How will the children clear the tables? How will they get their nap time blankets? Please don't do everything for them – you are a TEACH-er.

Create detailed lesson plans for the first few weeks. In order to be well prepared, you should over plan. Plan more than you and the children can possibly get done each day and the days will pass much more quickly for you and your kiddos!

You need to know where your children are coming from, and where they are going, from a developmental standpoint. Review the age appropriate developmental checklist so you are aware of signs to look for that indicate red flags in the developmental process so parents can consult with their pediatrician. If your Center sends home developmental evaluations around Christmas time and again in May, be sure to familiarize yourself with those, too, so you expose the children to many opportunities to *develop* the expected skills. How can you expect them to walk heel-to-toe on a low balance beam or run smoothly or string five beads on a string if you do not give them opportunities to explore and practice these skills?

Organize and Streamline your Learning Centers. Then as the children become familiar with your rules and can exhibit proper behavior, you can add more to each center. The children who have been with you for a year could handle 5000 Legos, knew not to cut one another's hair and could play in a sensory tub full of water without soaking themselves and the floor, but the children who are coming to you now cannot do that yet. Remove the markers and scissors from the Art Center, and only include as many Legos as you personally want to pick up in the Manipulative Center. If you have your Sensory Tub available for the children during the first couple of weeks, consider reducing the amount of water/or dry beans/ or sand to only a couple of inches and allow only one or two children at a time to play there.

Make an attractive Helper Chart or bulleting board with real jobs for the children to perform as they help take care of their classroom. Change helpers daily or weekly? Write names on the pieces and include a few blank ones so you can quickly include new enrollees, too.

Make a list of Time Fillers - quick activities, movement songs, games and finger plays you can use to keep the children busy during times when they have to "wait." Having a list to refer to is wonderful when you need an idea very quickly! These need to be fresh and new! They already know the ABC Song, the Freeze Game and Itsy Bitsy Spider!

What Attention Getters will you use? These are call back phrases to get the children's attention. Examples: Teacher: "All set?" Kiddos; "You bet!" or T: "Hocus Pocus!" K: "Everybody Focus!" or T: "Ready to rock?" K: "Ready to roll!"

What will make the afternoon classroom atmosphere and activities different from the morning? The times before and after nap time need to be somewhat different from one another or the children will be bored and will begin to act in unacceptable ways. This is easy to accomplish by adding or changing out the props in some of your learning and play centers such as switching from crayons and manila paper to markers and booklets (2 pieces of copy paper folded and stapled together) in the Art Center and adding a doctor's kit and stuffed animals to the Dramatic Play area; having an extended Music & Movement Time; and incorporating hands-on Math & Science activities into your afternoon.

Finally, what gets *you* excited about the new school year? Is it decorating your classroom or creating new hands on learning games for the children? Whatever it is, get busy! There are hundreds of ideas on Pinterest, Teachers Pay Teachers, and Preschool blogs to help you feel motivated about the new school year! Thank you for all you do!