

Here are helpful tips to help ease any separation anxiety and make the transition a bit easier on both of you.

**Prepare yourself for leaving your child at preschool** ~ Children can pick up on nonverbal clues and will sense your anxiety or uncertainty about the classroom, teacher or decision to leave them at school. Portray a sense of calm and confidence. You are making the right decision. Preschool is a wonderful place for your child to grow, learn and develop new and fulfilling relationships with caretakers and friends outside of the family. Create a consistent routine ~ Children thrive on routine. They need to know what to expect and what is expected of them.

**Create a consistent morning ritual** ~ having breakfast and packing their lunch together, preparing for school, happily departing home and saying hello to their teachers and friends before saying goodbye to each other.

**Drop-off and pick-up** ~ Be sure to be on time for morning drop-off and after school pick-up. When you get your child to school on time, it saves them the uncomfortable feeling of walking into the classroom where all of the other children have started their day and settled in. Being on time to pick up your child is extremely important as it can create anxiety in a child when all of the other mommies are picking up their child and they are still waiting and wondering when you are going to get there. The best way that a young child can end their day is to see mom waiting for them with a smile and a hug.

**A quick good-bye is best** ~ During the first few days of school, you may have stuck around a little longer to help ease your child's anxieties and help him to feel safe and comfortable in a new environment. Now that he or she has a few days under their belt, it's time to give a quick goodbye. Give a loving hug or kiss, assure your child that he'll have a wonderful time at school and that you will return shortly... and promptly leave. Your child will soon come to accept that that's how the goodbye plays out. Sticking around to comfort your child only prolongs the goodbye, making it tougher on everyone involved.

**Don't sneak out** ~ Leaving without saying goodbye with hope of avoiding a tearful farewell or a full-on meltdown, only makes the separation worse. You don't want your child to feel abandoned or tricked. You also want them to know what to expect, including a loving goodbye.

**Send along a little love** ~ it might help your child to have a transitional object to take to school for comfort. A photo of the family usually works well.

**Involve the teacher** ~ If your child has trouble separating, talk with your child's teacher. If she knows how your child feels, she'll be ready to help you with the separation and provide extra comfort. Teachers have lots of effective strategies for helping little ones adjust to the goodbye.

It's reassuring to remember that starting school and being away from a parent is often a tough transition for preschoolers and their parents. Kids adjust to the change at their own pace, some

needing a little extra time to feel comfortable and excited about their time away. Your patience, reassurance and consistency will help them to make the transition and embrace a rewarding new experience.