

The First Two Weeks: Helping Your Child Adjust Without Overreacting

The first two weeks of school can feel exciting and tiring at the same time. A child may come home quiet, irritable, hungry, or more emotional than usual. One difficult day does not always mean that something is wrong. Give the new routine time while paying attention to what repeats.

Use short, specific check-in questions. Try, “What was one easy part today?” “What was one hard part?” or “Who helped you?” Ask one or two questions, then listen. A tired child may need food, movement, quiet time, or rest before talking.

Protect the basics. Keep bedtime, wake time, meals, school preparation, and transportation as predictable as possible.

Prepare clothing, backpacks, and forms before bedtime. A steady home routine lowers the number of decisions everyone must make during a busy school week.

Look for patterns instead of reacting strongly to one event. Record repeated headaches, stomachaches, sleep changes, friendship concerns, homework struggles, or strong mood changes. Also record progress, such as learning a routine, naming a trusted adult, or recovering more quickly after a hard day.

Change one part of the routine at a time. A small adjustment might be an earlier bedtime, a quieter after-school period, a different homework start time, or one clear morning job. Give the change several days before deciding whether it helped.

Share repeated concerns with the teacher, counselor, school nurse, or pediatrician. Ask what they have observed and agree on one next step. Seek prompt help for safety concerns, severe distress, repeated school avoidance, or symptoms that interfere with daily life.

Did You Know?

- ✓ The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends predictable routines and short conversations about specific school worries to help children handle back-to-school changes.¹
- ✓ The American Academy of Pediatrics identifies sleep, nutritious meals, physical activity, open communication, and early support as important parts of a healthy school year.²
- ✓ The American Academy of Pediatrics explains that ongoing stress may appear as fatigue, sleep loss, headaches, stomach upset, irritability, reduced cooperation, or school difficulties, and children differ in how they adjust.³

Research Sources

1. American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health. [“Back-to-School Tips for Families.”](#) HealthyChildren.org. Updated August 5, 2024.
2. American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health. [“3 Ways to Help Your Kids Have a Healthy School Year.”](#) HealthyChildren.org. Updated August 13, 2025.
3. American Academy of Pediatrics. [“Helping Children Handle Stress.”](#) HealthyChildren.org. Updated December 29, 2020.

First-Two-Weeks Adjustment Tracker

Use this 14-day tracker to notice repeated patterns, record progress, and make one small adjustment at a time. It is an observation and communication tool, not a diagnosis.

Child's name: _____	School year/grade: _____
Week 1 begins: _____	Week 2 begins: _____

1. What to Record Each Day

Sleep/morning readiness • mood before school • energy after school • one short child comment • physical complaint • homework/routine difficulty • positive adjustment

2. Days 1–4

Day 1: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____ Positive sign _____

Day 2: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____ Positive sign _____

Day 3: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____ Positive sign _____

Day 4: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____ Positive sign _____

3. Days 5–8

Day 5: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____ Positive sign _____

Day 6: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____ Positive sign _____

Day 7: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____ Positive sign _____

Day 8: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____
Positive sign _____

4. Days 9–12

Day 9: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____
Positive sign _____

Day 10: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____
Positive sign _____

Day 11: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____
Positive sign _____

Day 12: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____
Positive sign _____

5. Days 13–14 and Pattern Review

Day 13: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____
Positive sign _____

Day 14: Sleep/morning _____ Mood/energy _____ Child comment _____ Complaint/difficulty _____
Positive sign _____

Pattern: _____ Change tried/result: _____ Concern/contact: _____
Next step/follow-up: _____