



the difference
1 can make.

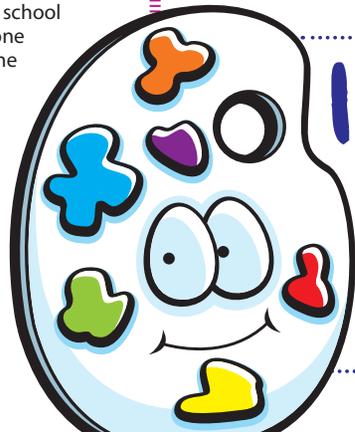


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Count the ways you can help your child adjust to kindergarten.

Here are a few tips to help you make the transition to school just a little bit easier—and a whole lot more fun. Then relax and enjoy this special rite of passage!

- 1 nice little gestures.** Let your child know you're thinking of her by stowing a simple drawing in her backpack or lunchbox. You'll make her day a little brighter.
- 2 let's rock-n-roll.** The right music can set the tone for the whole day. Keep several of your child's favorite CDs handy and allow him to choose the theme music for the day. Then join the party as you sing and dance your way to school.
- 3 validate school rules.** Use school rules at home. Explain their importance and work on any rules your child has difficulty following.
- 4 plan a play date.** Help your child get to know a classmate by planning a play date a few weeks before school starts. Seeing even just one friendly face can make the first day of school less intimidating.
- 5 stick to the list.** When buying supplies, stick to the suggested list posted by your school. Additional items may be hard to store and may end up being a waste of your money.



6 avoid fashion faux pas. When it comes to school clothes, comfort is key even if that means dressing kids in playclothes. Think practical instead of fashionable when it comes to snaps and buttons that are hard for little fingers to operate.

7 invent a goodbye ritual. Saying goodbye is often the scariest part about going to school and may be hard for several weeks. A high five, a series of hugs or a secret handshake will make saying goodbye fun and will help you leave on a positive note.

8 reel in your opinions. Never complain about the teacher in front of your child. It's important to support your child's feelings and frustrations, but always set up a private conference to discuss your concerns with the teacher.

9 fill up your day. Leaving your child on the first day may be harder on you than you expect. Plan a coffee date or shopping trip with a fellow mom to get you through the day.

10 get with the program. Kids thrive on routines. Do things in the same order every day—eat breakfast, get dressed, brush your teeth. Talk about your routine throughout the morning so your child knows what's coming next.

11 quiz the whiz. Familiarize yourself with your school's safety plan. Discuss it with your child, making sure you both know where to meet if there is an emergency. Every month or so, quiz each other on the key things to remember.

12 keep the creativity flowing. Don't let the learning stop when her backpack hits your floor. Clear out a place in your child's toy room or your family room for creative play. Invest in a chalkboard or art supplies to keep the creative juices flowing.

13 create a tradition. Help ease new school-year fears by creating a first-day-of-school routine. Take a photo in the same place every year, bake a cake or get up early and go out for breakfast to mark the event.



14 zap school bus fears. Riding the school bus can be frightening for a young child. Help ease her fears by introducing her to the bus driver on her first day or by taking advantage of a summer ride-along program if it's available in your area.

15 use e-mail. If you need to set up a meeting with the teacher, drop them an e-mail instead of calling. A teacher isn't always near a phone and answering parent phone calls during the day takes time away from the kids.

16 extra! extra! read all about it! Read school handouts and follow stories about your school in the local paper. Keeping up-to-date with what's happening at your child's school will help you feel more involved in his education.

17 wiggle room. Leave some time in your child's day for relaxation and good-old-fashioned play. Don't overschedule his time with extracurricular activities especially early in the school year.

18 evoke a positive attitude. If you're anxious about sending your child to school, she'll be anxious, too. Wear a smile and talk positively about her new adventure. Soon the mood will turn from dreary to cheery.

open communication. Be sure the teacher and school nurse are fully informed when it comes to your child's allergies, medications or special needs. Having everyone on the same page will avoid problems in the future.

helping hand. Volunteer in your child's classroom or for lunch duty, if the option is available at your school. He'll love seeing you during the day, and the teachers will be thrilled to have the extra help.

yap, yap, all the way home. When you pick your child up from school, don't pop in a DVD. Ask him about his day and the exciting things that are in the works for tomorrow.

21 jot down your 411 (important info). Most school-age children can remember things like their last names, addresses and phone numbers, but it's a good idea to keep a note card with the information in their backpacks—just in case. Some children may not be able to remember key details when they're rattled or scared.

22 discuss the non-negotiables. Breakfast and bedtime should be first on your list. Talk to your child about the importance of a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast. Proper rest and a full stomach help kids concentrate and follow the rules.



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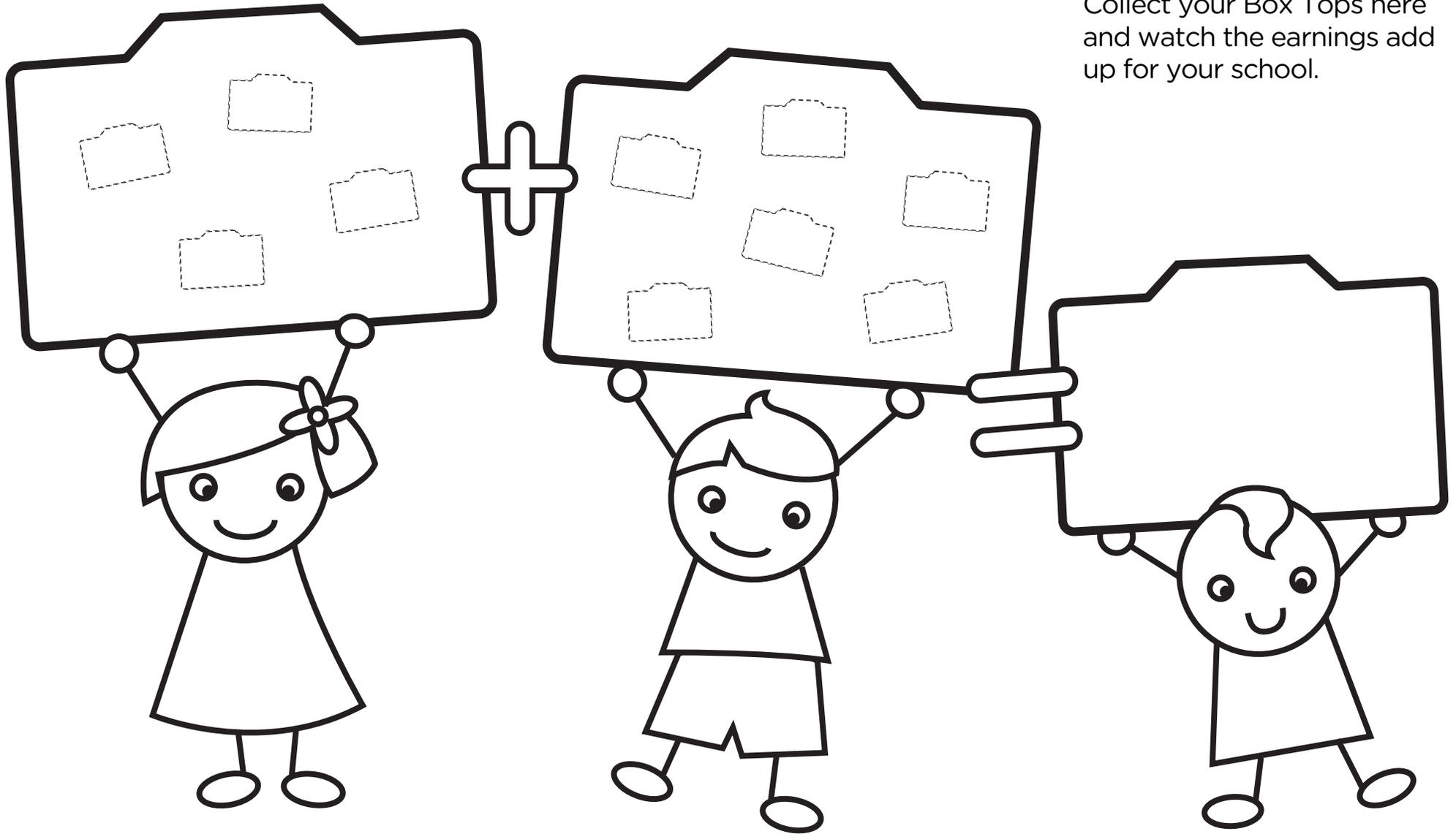
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