

Back to School Checklist

for Autism Parents

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✓ Before School Starts

Complete these 1–4 weeks out

- Schedule a meet-the-teacher visit before the first day
- Share your child's communication preferences with the new teacher in writing
- Confirm IEP accommodations are active from day one — not week three
- Review and update sensory supports (headphones, fidget tools, movement breaks)
- Practice the morning routine for at least one week before school starts
- Create or update a visual schedule for the school day
- Identify your child's safe adult at the new school
- Set up your preferred communication method with the teacher (daily log, email, app)
- Visit the building, walk the route from drop-off to classroom if possible
- Get a photo of the new teacher to share with your child ahead of time

✓ The First Week

Watch for these, celebrate small wins

- Build in extra decompression time after school each day
- Keep after-school activities minimal for the first two weeks
- Check in daily but briefly: "What was one good thing?" — not "How was your day?"
- Watch for delayed stress reactions: sleep disruption, increased stimming at home
- Ask for a 15-minute check-in with the teacher at the end of week two
- Celebrate every small win out loud — transitions are hard work

✓ IEP & School Communication

Advocate early, document everything

- Confirm IEP goals were updated before the school year started

- Send a one-page "Meet My Child" letter to the new teacher before day one
- Schedule a check-in meeting for week 3–4, not just the annual review
- Set communication expectations in the first week — not the first month
- Document anything that isn't going as expected: notes, dates, emails
- If services don't transfer correctly, address it in writing immediately