

The Prepared Environment's

# Back-to-School Reset

## Declutter & Set Up Your Home for a Calmer School Year

As the new school year approaches, it's the perfect time to reset your home and routines. This isn't just about buying school supplies, it's about creating a space that supports learning, independence, and calm mornings (yes, they're possible!).

These checklists will walk you through how to declutter key areas of your home, set up helpful systems, and shift into a back-to-school mindset with your child. Getting organized now means fewer chaotic mornings, smoother homework routines, and more time to enjoy the school year together.

### Involve Your Child

- Let them help declutter and set up their space
- Give them choices to promote ownership and responsibility
- Use this as a chance to talk about what helps them feel prepared

### Reflect on Last Year

- Ask: What routines worked? What caused stress?
- Help your child imagine a smoother year:
- "What would make mornings feel easier?"
- "What space helps you focus best?"

### Plan for Regular Resets

- Schedule mini "reset" days monthly to tidy, restock, and adjust
- Keep it light: put on music, make it a team effort



TAKE CARE,

*Sarah*

# Why Routines Support Independence & Reduce Stress

**Predictability Creates Security:** When children know what to expect, they feel safe and more in control. This lowers anxiety for everyone.

**Less Decision Fatigue:** A routine eliminates the constant question of “What’s next?,” freeing up energy for connection instead of negotiation.

**Builds Confidence:** Repeating the same steps each day allows children to master them. Over time, they can complete more tasks on their own.

**Fewer Power Struggles:** When the routine becomes the guide, parents no longer have to “be the boss” of every little thing.

## Tips for Co-Creating Routines with Your Child

**Start with a Conversation, Not a List:** Begin by asking your child what they think helps them get ready, or what they’d change about mornings or bedtime.

**Make It Visual and Accessible:** Use photos, drawings, or icons—especially for younger kids. Hang the routine where they can see and interact with it.

**Offer Choices Within Structure:** “Would you like to brush your teeth before or after getting dressed?” gives them ownership while keeping things on track.

**Keep It Short & Sweet:** Focus on 4–6 key steps, especially with younger children. A long list becomes overwhelming.

**Practice the Routine Together:** Walk through it step-by-step a few times as a team. Celebrate their independence when they begin to follow it solo.

# Declutter First: Clear Out the Clutter

## **Entryway/Mudroom**

- ☐ Donate outgrown shoes, coats, and backpacks
- ☐ Create a designated hook or bin for each child
- ☐ Set up a shoe tray or basket

## **Closet & Clothing**

- ☐ Sort clothes: keep what fits, donate or store the rest
- ☐ Make sure there's enough school-appropriate clothing
- ☐ Organize by outfit or type for easy mornings

## **School Supplies**

- ☐ Gather supplies from around the house
- ☐ Toss dried-out markers, broken pencils, and used-up notebooks
- ☐ Create one central supply station

## **Toys & Craft Supplies**

- ☐ Clear out toys they've outgrown
- ☐ Tidy up craft bins and discard dried-out materials

## **Papers & Art**

- ☐ Sort through old schoolwork and artwork
- ☐ Keep special pieces in a memory bin or folder
- ☐ Recycle or digitize the rest

# Set Up Systems for a Smoother School Year

## Morning Routine Station

- ☐ A small tray or basket for hairbrush, hair ties, toothbrush, etc.
- ☐ A visual routine chart (especially for younger kids)

## Focus Zone

- ☐ Choose a clutter-free, well-lit spot
- ☐ Stock it with essentials (pencils, erasers, scissors, etc.)
- ☐ Use bins or drawers to keep it tidy

## Calendar & Command Center

- ☐ Family calendar for school events, activities, appointments
- ☐ Mail/school paper inbox
- ☐ Weekly menu or meal planner

## Lunch & Snack Prep

- ☐ Declutter the pantry and fridge
- ☐ Create a bin for school lunch items
- ☐ Prep a kid-accessible snack drawer or shelf

## Backpack Drop Zone

- ☐ Designated hook or cubby for each child's backpack
- ☐ Basket or bin for library books, permission slips, etc.

# Suggestions for Routine Building by Age Group

## Ages 4-6:

- Use picture-based routines with 4-5 steps
- Keep the process playful and practice through pretend play
- Use repetition and gentle reminders
- Let them place the routine chart somewhere they can see easily

## Ages 7-9:

- Offer more voice in deciding order and details
- Use checkboxes, magnets, or laminated charts with dry-erase markers
- Add light responsibility (e.g. packing lunch, laying out clothes)

## Ages 10-12:

- Give them full responsibility for designing their chart
- Include time estimations or digital reminders if appropriate
- Tie routines to personal goals (e.g. "If I get ready early, I can read before school")
- Let them revise their own routine weekly or monthly

# Common Roadblocks + What to Try Instead

## Roadblock

## Try This Instead

Your child resists the routine

- Invite them to help make it.
- Give 2-3 small choices.
- Start with just one part of the day.

They forget the steps

- Make it visual.
- Practice the routine.
- Hang it at eye level.

They rush or skip parts

- Add timing or a gentle timer.
- Include a checklist.

You feel like you're still doing all the reminding

- Step back.
- Use questions instead: "What's next on your chart?" "What do you still need to do?"

Routine falls apart after a week

- Totally normal! Set a weekly "reset" or reflection time to check in and adjust together.

# Sample Scripts for Routine Conversations

Here are a few ways to start a supportive, non-controlling conversation about routines:

## **Curious Questions:**

"What part of the morning feels easy for you? What part feels hard?"

## **Collaborative Planning:**

"I was thinking we could try a new morning routine to help things feel less rushed. Want to help me plan it?"

## **Reflect & Revise:**

"How do you think our new routine is going? Is there something we should change to make it better?"

## **Encouragement & Ownership:**

"I noticed you remembered all the steps without me saying a word. That shows how ready you are!"

# Back-to-School Confidence Checklist

## Before School Starts

- ☐ **Acknowledge their feelings without trying to fix them right away**  
"It makes sense that you're feeling nervous. Lots of kids feel this way before school starts."
- ☐ **Read books about school**  
Choose stories that show first-day jitters or positive school experiences.
- ☐ **Practice parts of the routine ahead of time**  
Walk or drive the school route, try packing lunch, or role-play saying goodbye at drop-off.
- ☐ **Create a calm, predictable morning routine together**  
Use your routine builder to design a visual chart they can follow independently.
- ☐ **Plan something familiar for the first day**  
Choose a favourite outfit, a comforting lunch, or a note in their bag.
- ☐ **Get used to the environment**  
If possible, play at the school playground or go for walks in the area



# Back-to-School Confidence Checklist

## During the First Week



### **Check in daily, but lightly**

Ask open-ended questions: "What was one thing that felt good today?" or "What surprised you?"



### **Avoid asking too many questions right after school**

Give them time to decompress. Offer a snack and quiet time before diving into conversation.



### **Stick to routines as much as possible at home**

Familiar rhythms give your child a sense of security after navigating something new.



### **Share something positive about your own day**

Modeling calm and openness helps them feel safe to do the same.



### **Offer a consistent goodbye ritual**

A secret handshake, hug, or saying like "I love you, have a great day, I'll see you after school."

# Back-to-School Confidence Checklist

## If Worry Persists



### **Use visual aids or a comfort object**

A small item in their pocket (a note, stone, or token) can serve as a reminder of your connection.



### **Keep a simple countdown**

Mark off days on a small calendar to show progress and routine building.



### **Ask for support from their teacher**

Let the teacher know your child is having a tough transition – most are happy to help.



### **Celebrate progress, not perfection**

“You went in even though you were nervous. That’s really brave.”



# THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to use this! I hope it will help you create a more organized and peaceful space with your child. I'd love to hear how it goes - feel free to share your experience and tag me on social media!

Follow me @the\_prepared\_environment for more tips on organizing with kids, creating a Montessori-inspired home, and making decluttering a positive experience.

TAKE CARE,  
*Sarah*