

Established Routines Necessary for the New School Year
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For the majority of Oconee County youth, school started last week. After a long two months of summer spent swimming in the pool, watching movies until dark, going to bed late at night, sleeping in every morning, the transition back to school can be quite stressful. Not only for children but also for parents!

Fortunately, there are some small things parents can do to help make going back to school a pleasure, not a nightmare of nagging and yelling, delaying and dawdling.

First, re-establish bedtime and mealtime plans and explain what you expect for the morning routine. For example, tell your child "I'll wake you up at 7 o'clock, you need to be dressed by 7:30 for breakfast. And I expect you to be prepared with all your school supplies and ready to walk out the door by 8:00"

Along with planning your morning routine, make sure you plan plenty of extra time. Children should have ample time to wake up, eat breakfast and get to school without rushing through the entire process.

Turn off the TV in the morning. Encourage your child to read, color, or do puzzles as morning activities rather than watching television. This will help ease your child into the learning process and the school day. Your child will arrive at school better prepared to learn each morning if he or she has engaged in more active activities than TV watching.

Make sure you're kids are getting to bed early – ideally this would begin a week before school gets underway so they will be well on their way to establishing a regular sleep schedule. If not, it is never too late to establish a new routine. Also, it helps if parents are up and ready first. All will go more smoothly when you are available to guide your children each step of the way and not rushing to get yourself ready at the same time.

As much as possible, stay positive in the mornings and avoid yelling and harsh treatment. Negative ingredients can quickly become embedded in the morning routine. No parent likes sending their children off to school after a screaming match!

Finally, remember your goal. You want your children up and out the door on time and to move securely through the school day so each can reach his or her academic potential. Ask yourself how you wish the school year to go and then ask yourself how you can make it happen.

For more information about the 4-H program or other youth development issues, contact the Oconee County Cooperative Extension Office at (706) 769-3946 or stop by our office located behind the Oconee County Courthouse.