

Smoother Back-to-School Mornings

A few real, tested tricks to take the stress out of mornings — and get your kids doing more of the routine themselves.

1. Do as much as you can in advance

Mornings go smoother when the decisions are already made. This can look as detailed or as simple as works for your family:

Prep snacks on Sunday

Portion out the week's snacks into grab-and-go containers so nobody has to think about it on a weekday morning.

Prep some lunch items Sunday or the night before

You don't have to build full lunches ahead — even prepping a few components buys you real time back each morning.

Lay out clothes the night before

Or plan outfits for the whole week on Sunday. Get as detailed as you want — both work.

2. Reward the routine

Kids stay motivated when they can see and check off their own progress. An app like Skylight works well, or keep it simple with a printable chart they slide or check off themselves. Use the chart below as a starting point, and adjust chores based on your kids' ages.

3. Small tweaks, big difference

Meet your kids where they are

Once they're dressed and downstairs for breakfast, they don't go back up. Keep hair brushes and products downstairs — one tiny tweak like this can drastically improve your routine.

Let breakfast be independent

As kids get older, adapt your equipment so they can serve themselves — a single-serving egg maker that skips the stove, an easy bowl of cereal they can grab on their own.

Prep vitamins for the week

Portion daily vitamins once a week and keep them out on the counter so remembering to take them isn't a decision each morning.

Label everything

Keep a roll of name-and-phone-number labels in the cabinet so you can quickly re-label water bottles and snack containers as needed.

Choose lunch gear that saves time

Lunch boxes that double as ice packs save space and prep time. A bento-style thermos works well for kids who don't love sandwiches, and a double-compartment container covers snacks for home, camp, and school.

Use visual and audio reminders

When you're falling behind, a timer or an Alexa reminder keeps everyone on track without you having to be the one saying it.

Let the Roomba be the signal

Set it to run every weekday morning at 8am. When it starts, that's the family's cue — it's time to start packing up and getting out the door.

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