



# Back-to-School tool kit

As you look through the following pages, you'll find tips for getting your child to move toward independence and ways for you to encourage your child. Click on each icon below to navigate to the start of each section.

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**Easing into the school year**



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**Kindergarten checklist**



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**Routines and tips**



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**Lunch box notes**



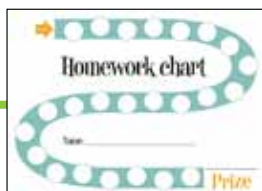
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**Teaming up with teachers**



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**Homework chart and routines**



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**After-school talking prompts**



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**Don't forget your marriage**



# Easing into the school year



As the first day of school approaches, consider these tips for getting a smart start to the season.

## School supplies scavenger hunt

Get your kids excited about school by having a scavenger hunt to search out abandoned school supplies scattered throughout your home. Have craft supplies on hand so your kids can personalize their finds.

- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Glue
- ☐ Ruler
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Highlighters
- ☐ Ballpoint pens
- ☐ 3-ring binders
- ☐ Pencil case
- ☐ Folders
- ☐ Gently used spiral notebooks
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Ideas for school shopping

- » Get together with friends to swap gently-used clothes and school supplies.
- » Let kids comparison shop using ads and give them a budget to teach money management.
- » Using school list, buy what's needed and purchase bargain extras to donate to charity and to stock homework station.
- » Consider color-coding supplies for each child to prevent squabbles.
- » Use shopping trip to discuss with your child her anxieties and anticipations for the coming year.

## Set the routine

To set up your child for a successful start to the school year, introduce these habits prior to the first day:

- » Make bedtime earlier by 15 minutes each evening and wake up your kids 15 minutes earlier each morning in the week prior to school to condition their bodies to the routine.
- » Consider establishing other regular routines such as breakfast, shower and free time.
- » Set the expectation of no TV or video games until homework is complete or until the weekend.
- » Start reviewing math or spelling flash cards.
- » Pray with your child before sending him out the door!

## Money at your fingertips

Put 100 \$1 bills in a large envelope with a stack of smaller envelopes and pens inside. This way, when your kids come home needing \$11 for a field trip, you are not checking couch cushions, sending Dad out for cash or accumulating notes in their piggy banks. Less stress! —Angi B., Arizona

# Kindergarten checklist



Use the following guidelines to determine if your child is ready for kindergarten.

## Motor skills

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Can your child ...

- ☐ throw a ball?
- ☐ walk in a straight line?
- ☐ color, draw, use a pencil and scissors?

## Academics

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Can your child ...

- ☐ tell a short story in sequence?
- ☐ count to 10?
- ☐ recognize the basic shapes and colors?
- ☐ spell his name?

## Enrollment

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To enroll your child in school, you'll likely need to provide the following:

- ☐ documentation of a physical exam by your pediatrician
- ☐ record of up-to-date immunizations
- ☐ your child's Social Security number (preferred but often not required)
- ☐ birth certificate
- ☐ proof of residency in the school district

## Personal skills

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Can your child ...

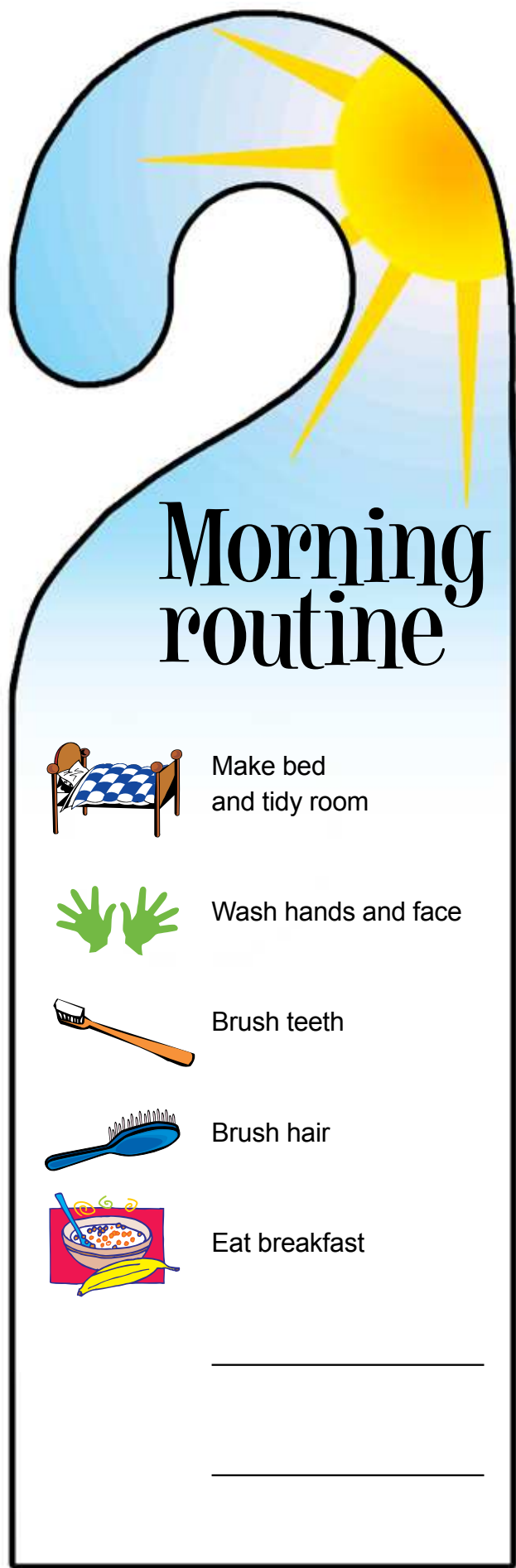
- ☐ use the restroom by herself?
- ☐ fasten her own pants?
- ☐ wash her hands?
- ☐ put on her own coat?

## Social skills

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Can your child ...

- ☐ share with others?
- ☐ play alone?
- ☐ work alongside other kids?
- ☐ stick to a single task for several minutes?



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4. Cut door hanger along solid line, and glue to the back of the evening routine hanger.
5. Laminate and hang from your child's doorknob.



Feed pets



Put homework in bag



Pray



Get lunch bag

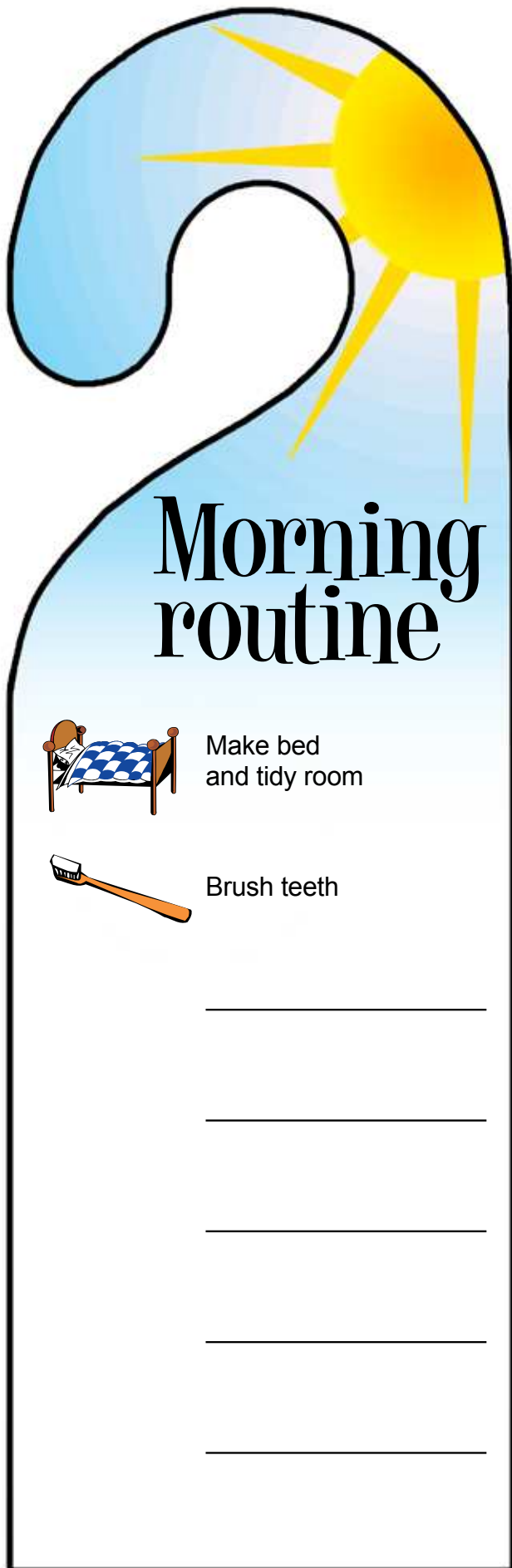


Put on shoes & coat

# Customize!


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A large, vertical, light blue door hanger template with a black outline. At the top, there is a yellow sun with rays. The text "Morning routine" is written in a large, black, serif font. Below the title, there are five rows of horizontal lines for writing tasks. To the left of the first line, there is an icon of a bed with a blue and white checkered blanket. To the left of the second line, there is an icon of a toothbrush. To the left of the third line, there is an icon of a blue backpack. To the left of the fourth line, there is an icon of a blue hairbrush. To the left of the fifth line, there is an icon of a brown paper lunch bag with the word "Lunch" written on it. To the left of the sixth line, there is an icon of a pair of hands clasped together in prayer.

## Morning routine

 Make bed and tidy room

 Brush teeth

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Feed pets



Eat breakfast



Put homework in bag



Brush hair



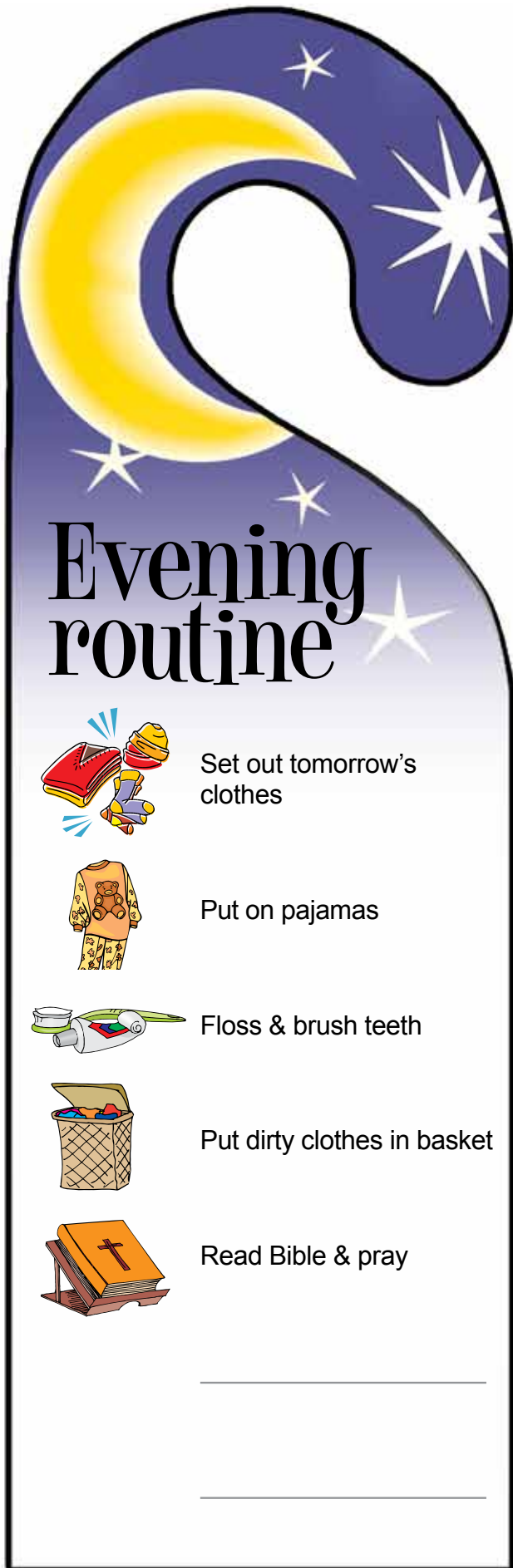
Get lunch bag



Put on shoes & coat



Pray



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Pack lunch



Set alarm



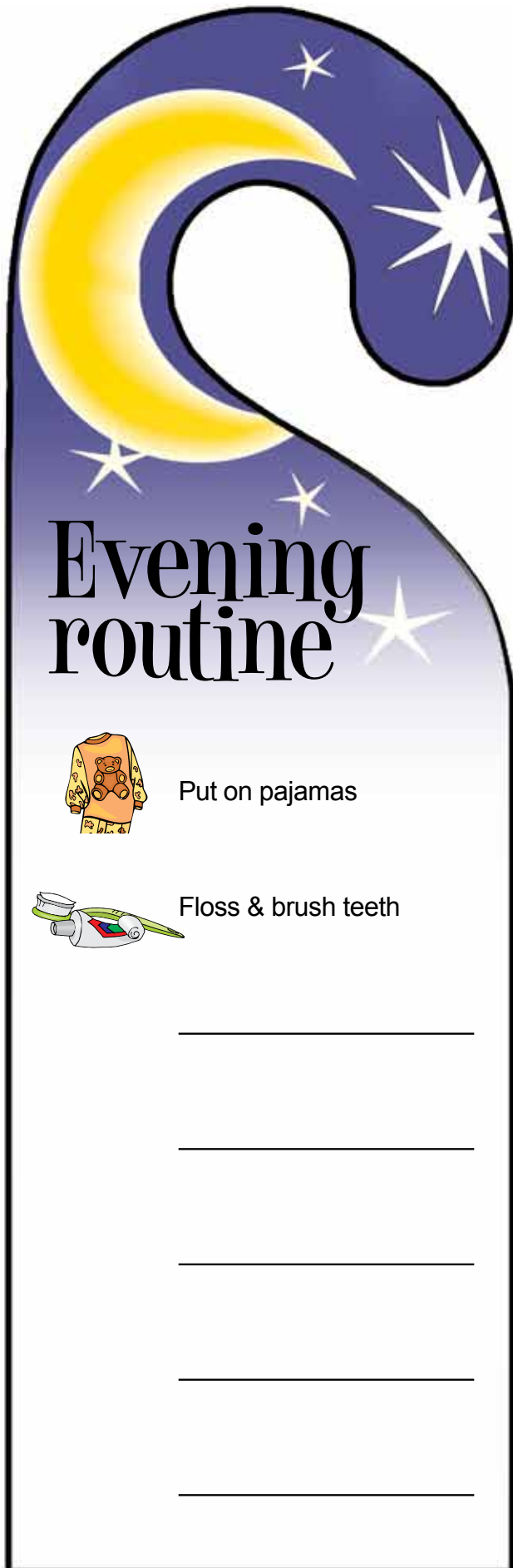
Set breakfast table



Have bedtime snack



Put homework in bag



# Evening routine



Put on pajamas



Floss & brush teeth

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Pack lunch



Read Bible & pray



Set out clothes



Put homework in bag



Set breakfast table

# Helpful ideas

## Start the day right

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### » Begin with prayer

We pray over each of our children and their specific needs. We get up a few minutes early, and just before they leave for school we gather in a circle and hold hands. My husband and I pray for their day and ask God to make them strong Christian leaders in their school and among their peers.

—Rene W., Oklahoma

### » Put on the armor of God

Before our children left for school, my husband and I had our 3-, 5- and 7-year-olds put on the full armor of God. We would say Ephesians 6:14-17 together as we all strapped on imaginary armor—the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of readiness, shield of faith, helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit. Only then were we ready for the day.

—Sheila S., Colorado

## Drama-free mornings

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To end morning battles, I created a “dressing room” for my daughters. This budget-friendly solution included hanging a full-length mirror on the wall. I hung a hook for the next day’s outfit and added a small cloth bin to hold their socks, underwear, hair bows or other accessories. We pick out the clothes the night before, and it has made mornings peaceful. My 4-year-old loves the grown-up feeling the dressing room gives her.

—Amy B., Oklahoma

## Simplify breakfast

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We have a menu of speedy breakfast choices that our children can “order” the night before, such as bagels, toast, cold cereal, instant oatmeal or waffles. Using a small bin on the kitchen table, one for the freezer and one for the refrigerator, we put each order in the appropriate bin the night before. Cold cereal can even be premeasured and plates stacked buffet-style. The next morning, we take out the bins, and the kids can grab their selection.

—Kelly W., Oregon

## Make a study space

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Use this checklist to identify the best study space for your child:

- ☐ quiet, away from the hub of family activity
- ☐ well-lit
- ☐ plenty of space to spread out papers and supplies
- ☐ away from potential distractions such as TVs/radios, cellphones and computers
- ☐ a place for each child’s materials. Try color-coding each storage bin.

# Lunch box notes

Each day of the week can be an opportunity to show your child you're thinking of him or her. Here are a few lunch notes to get you started. For Trivia Tuesday and

Wacky Wednesday, you can search online for trivia and jokes to fill out the blank cards. Print as many sheets as you like.

## Monday memories

I remember when . . .

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## Monday memories

I caught you being kind. Here's what I saw:

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## Monday memories

Did you know that when you were a baby, you . . .

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## Monday memories

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## Monday memories

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## Monday memories

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## Trivia Tuesday

Did you know that it is impossible to lick your elbow?  
Go ahead, try it!

## Trivia Tuesday

Did you know that there are no English words that rhyme with silver or purple?

## Trivia Tuesday

Did you know that no piece of normal-size paper can be folded in half more than seven times?

## Trivia Tuesday

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## Trivia Tuesday

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## Trivia Tuesday

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### Lunch Helpers

Here's an idea that gives children a chance to pack their lunch and gradually learn responsibility.

I pack my children's lunches, and they know to retrieve them before they leave for school. As they grow, I add responsibilities.

**Grade 1:** Pack your snack.

**Grade 2:** Pack your snack and drink.

**Grade 3:** Pack snack, drink and fruit.

**Grade 4:** Pack sandwich (or main dish), drink, snack and fruit.

Some children may be able to handle these responsibilities at younger ages. If they can, let them!

—Cindi F., Ohio

## Wacky Wednesday

**Q** When do you go on red and stop on green?

**A** When you're eating watermelon.

—Heather from Florida

Courtesy of Clubhouse and Clubhouse Jr. magazines

## Wacky Wednesday

**Q** What do you call a hamburger and milkshake driving 70 mph?

**A** Fast food.

—Andrew from Georgia

Courtesy of Clubhouse and Clubhouse Jr. magazines

## Wacky Wednesday

**Q** What is Captain Hook's favorite store?

**A** The secondhand store.

—Libby from Oklahoma

Courtesy of Clubhouse and Clubhouse Jr. magazines

## Wacky Wednesday

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## Wacky Wednesday

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## Wacky Wednesday

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For more jokes, visit [ClubhouseMagazine.com](http://ClubhouseMagazine.com) and search "Lots O' Laughs."

## Thursday thoughts

My prayer is that you'll have  
the joy of the Lord today!

## Thursday thoughts

This is the day the LORD has  
made; let us rejoice and be glad  
in it.

—Psalm 118:24

## Thursday thoughts

Jesus loves you! I'm praying  
that you'll . . .

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## Thursday thoughts

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## Thursday thoughts

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## Thursday thoughts

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For more prayer or Scripture ideas, visit [ThrivingFamily.com](http://ThrivingFamily.com)  
and search "pray for kids."

## Friday finisher

Happy Friday! Work hard, stay focused, have fun, and I'll see you after school. I have a surprise waiting for you!

## Friday finisher

Praying for you today as you take your test. May God help you focus and ease your anxiety. Good luck!

## Friday finisher

Have a good day! Listen to your teacher, play nicely with your friends, and I'll see you soon for the weekend!

## Friday finisher

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## Friday finisher

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## Friday finisher

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Visit [ClubhouseJr.com/recipes](http://ClubhouseJr.com/recipes) and [ClubhouseMagazine.com/create](http://ClubhouseMagazine.com/create) for lunch and snack recipe ideas!

# Teaming up with teachers



A successful school year begins with teamwork—between you, your child and your child’s teachers. As your child heads back to school, consider these suggestions for building a positive, collaborative relationship with his teachers. Go to **ThrivingFamily.com** and search “Teaming up With Teachers” to get worksheets on communicating with your child’s teachers.

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## » Treat the teacher as an expert

Be positive in your attitude and approach, making it a habit to contact the teacher under positive circumstances. Showing up only when you want to discuss a problem can push a teacher into defensive mode as soon as you walk through the door.

## » Ask, “What can I do?”

When discussing your child, start many of your questions with, “What can I do . . .” Let the teacher know you and your child are taking responsibility for learning.

## » Recognize limitations

Recognize that there are practical limitations on what the teacher can do. If your child needs to follow a certain system for keeping track of homework, create the paperwork yourself so that the teacher needs to only fill in a few blanks.

## » Be objective

Don’t rely solely on the information you get from your child about a particular incident. Naturally, your personal loyalty rests with your child, but do your best to look at the situation objectively and see it through the eyes of the teacher.

## » Discuss with your child

Discuss the conversations you have with the teacher openly with your child. Emphasize the positive areas that you and the teacher discussed, and brainstorm how to use those strengths to improve in other areas.

## » Value variety

Help your child understand and value a variety of teaching methods. Every teacher is a lesson in learning. By helping your child appreciate the unique styles of different teachers, you’ll prepare him to use his strengths to cope with life’s many other differences.

—Cynthia Ulrich Tobias, author of *The Way They Learn*

# Kids

usually don't recognize the long-term benefits of education. But positive reinforcement is still a great way to keep kids on task. Use this handy chart to encourage your child to complete his homework and earn daily progress toward a prize that you've agreed upon. If your child has no homework for a certain day, have him practice math facts, read for half

an hour or work on upcoming projects during the time slot you've set aside for schoolwork. Decide together on what amount of work should be done for each step, and emphasize that the schoolwork must be completed with a positive attitude. Use the blank lines to type in the goals for each day.

Post the chart on your fridge, and track progress with a magnet or marker.



## Homework chart

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Prize

Work to complete:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

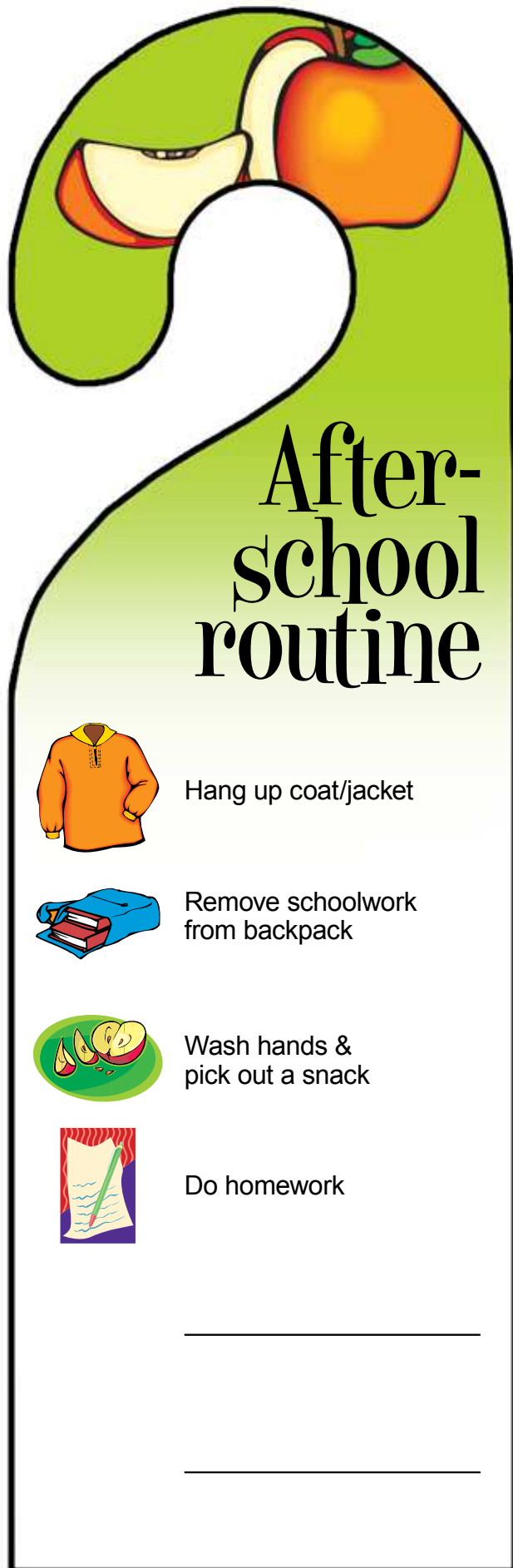
4. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_



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Empty & clean lunch box



Feed pets



Practice music



Do chores



Read a book

# After-school routine

Hang up coat/jacket

Remove schoolwork from backpack

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# Customize!

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Do homework



Empty & clean lunch box



Practice music



Do chores



Feed pets



Pick a snack



Read a book



## » True/false game

Ask your child to respond to your statements with “true” or “false.” Start with broad statements (“I think you played with someone at recess today”), refine the details (“I think it was a girl from your classroom”), and end with specific reflections (“You hope to play again with her tomorrow, but maybe you’ll play a different game”). You’ll be surprised at how often your child will offer more information when you guess incorrectly!

## » Opposites

Have your child pick a set of opposites to answer. Then, answer a set yourself. Choose from the following:

- Best/worst part of the day
- Most surprising/completely expected event
- Memorable/forgettable conversation
- Most interesting/boring classroom moment

## » Two truths and a wish

Ask your child to tell you two true things that happened during the day and one thing she was hoping would have happened. All three should be told as if they happened that day. Try to guess your child’s wish!

## More than “How was your day?”

That age-old question usually ends one way: “Fine.” Use these tips to learn more about your child’s day at school:

» **Remember to follow up** on situations your child has talked about earlier—what she was dreading about the school day or what she was looking forward to.

» **Ask specific questions.** “What activity did you do in gym class?” is less overwhelming than “Tell me about your day.”

» **Try making comments instead of asking questions.** Questions can sometimes raise defenses, while comments serve as an invitation.

» **Give verbal cues** that you’re listening and engaged. This will help your child talk more about a topic. →



## » Complete this . . .

For the reluctant talker, ask him to fill in the blank for several statements. Start simple, mix in a few silly ones, and slip in a follow-up question once you've gotten the conversation going. Examples:

- "Today during math class, I almost \_\_\_\_\_."
- "The funniest comment from a classmate came from \_\_\_\_\_."
- "Today, I was hoping that \_\_\_\_\_."
- "Tomorrow, I probably should \_\_\_\_\_."

## » Connect with activity

For many kids (especially boys), a great way to ignite conversation is to go straight to an activity your child enjoys. Give him the space to volunteer conversation about his day.

» **Listen as kids talk with one another.** Create opportunities by offering to drive or hosting study sessions.

» **For older kids, don't be quick to offer solutions to problems.** Sometimes, kids just need to think out loud.

» **Ask your child to try to stump you** on something he learned that day.

» **Talk about nonschool topics first.** Let your kids know what they missed during the day, or what's happening on the homefront. When you model openness, your kids are more likely to follow suit.

» **Don't force the conversation.** Some kids just need to decompress after school. Be available later when they are willing to talk.





# Don't forget your marriage

The school year means lots of exciting opportunities and challenges for your family. But even though much of that growth happens with your kids, it doesn't mean your marriage needs to go on the back burner. The school year can be a time of growth for you and your spouse, too.

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## » Carve out alone time

Easy and consistent bedtimes for your kids mean more alone time for you and your spouse—and a less stressful morning for your partnership. Remember to ease into the new schedule gradually rather than the night before classes begin.

## » Play to your strengths

Before school starts, talk about the daily routine. Take notes on which tasks may be better suited to each other's strengths and schedules. The more details you decide upfront, the less stress your relationship will feel when different issues come up.

## » Connect daily

Before you part ways for the day and when you're together in the evening, make it a point to talk about something other than the day's routine. News, funny stories from the day, memories—it's important to connect daily as a couple, not just as a couple of parents.

## » Have a date night

Flip through the school calendar and plan a few date nights with your spouse. Book a baby sitter and check out a few new restaurants, or for inexpensive date-night ideas, visit <http://bit.ly/McH6M3>.

## » Today I will . . .

So, what will you do today? Commit to do one small favor each day for your spouse. The next page has ideas to help. Cut each card along the solid line. Each day, draw one from the pile and vow to complete the action by the end of the day. Invite your spouse to do the same for you. Keep it a secret, and take turns guessing which kind action your spouse did for you.

<b>Today I will:</b>	lighten up and laugh.	<b>Today I will:</b>	give the benefit of the doubt and not believe the worst about my spouse.	<b>Today I will:</b>	be content where I am.
<b>Today I will:</b>	be careful what I say.	<b>Today I will:</b>	be the first to apologize.	<b>Today I will:</b>	leave a handwritten note for my spouse to find.
<b>Today I will:</b>	be my spouse's best friend.	<b>Today I will:</b>	truly listen instead of only thinking what I'll say next.	<b>Today I will:</b>	take a timeout to avoid hurting my spouse.
<b>Today I will:</b>	practice intentional kindness to my spouse.	<b>Today I will:</b>	be the last to let go of our embrace.	<b>Today I will:</b>	give more than I take.
<b>Today I will:</b>	keep my heart open toward my spouse.	<b>Today I will:</b>	resist the urge to control my spouse.	<b>Today I will:</b>	honor and cherish my spouse.
<b>Today I will:</b>	keep my commitment to my marriage.	<b>Today I will:</b>	put my spouse's needs above my own.	<b>Today I will:</b>	acknowledge that attitude is a choice.
<b>Today I will:</b>	not fight to have the last word.	<b>Today I will:</b>	seek to learn something new about my spouse.	<b>Today I will:</b>	keep private matters private.
<b>Today I will:</b>	be a team player in my marriage.	<b>Today I will:</b>	pause before reacting in a harsh way.	<b>Today I will:</b>	do something out of character that my spouse would appreciate.
<b>Today I will:</b>	give my spouse my undivided attention.	<b>Today I will:</b>		<b>Today I will:</b>	
<b>Today I will:</b>		<b>Today I will:</b>		<b>Today I will:</b>	

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