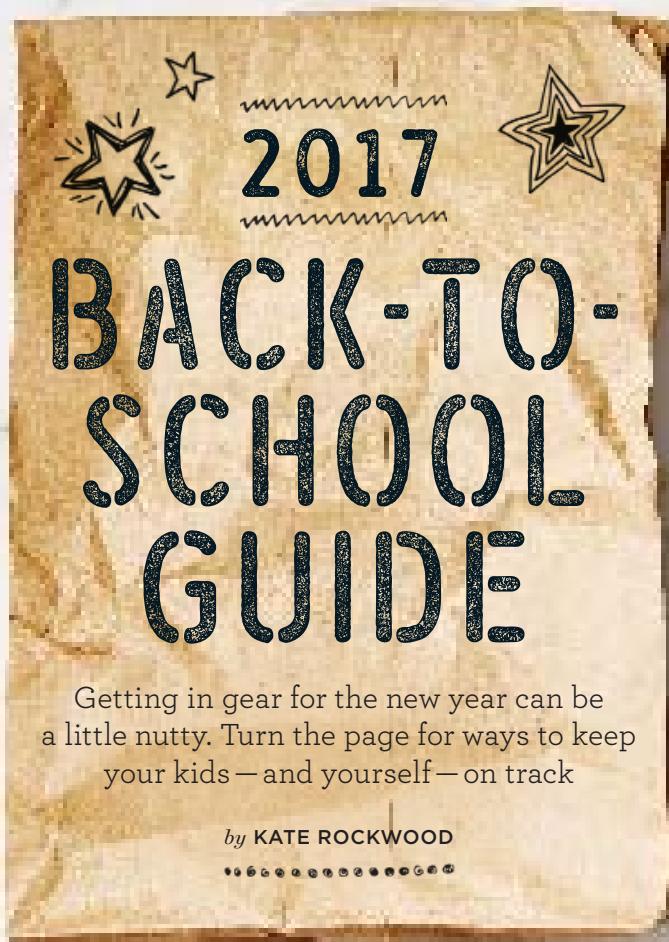


FAMILY ROOM



Getting in gear for the new year can be a little nutty. Turn the page for ways to keep your kids — and yourself — on track

by KATE ROCKWOOD

•••••

This is how you roll!

Send the kiddies off with easy-to-bake chewy fruit strips made with real fruit and very little sugar. Recipe, page 137



GROUP DYNAMICS GH Kitchen Appliances Lab Director Sharon Franke's motley crew of grandkids and their friends.

ON THE SPOT
Ask your child to stand in front of the school's welcome sign, or make one yourself with his name and grade.



Take the Perfect FIRST-DAY PHOTO

Try these pro tips from Thomas Kubik, dad of two and founder of TK Photography.

Cheat the calendar. A photo session on the actual first morning of school may be too hectic. Stage one the day before, in the hour leading up to sunset. (Photogs call this “the golden hour” for its soft, flattering light.)

Choose an annual place. “Position your kids against the same marker at the beginning of each school year, and you’ll have a striking visual of how much they’ve grown,” says Kubik.

Play with props. A bright backpack or lunch box adds a pop of color and gives kids something to do with their hands.

Stagger siblings. A group shot is a must, but do solo pics first, starting with the oldest kid;

the group photo comes last. “The little one wants to do whatever her big brother or sister is doing,” and so will cooperate with the solo shot, says Kubik. “When you have her positioned, add the older kids to the frame—they follow directions better.”

Skip saying “cheese.” “Smiling on command always seems fake and forced,” he says. “For younger kids, ask them to make silly faces or noises—then snap when they laugh afterward. For older kids, ask what their favorite ice cream is. Then say, ‘Did you say pickle ice cream?’ It doesn’t have to be a genius joke to get them to crack a smile.” And if your teen rolls her eyes at you? Capture that! It’s an authentic response you’ll love later (promise).

Calm a Squirmy Child

Fidget spinners are everywhere, but they’re just one of many tools kids can use to improve focus. Consider making one (or more!) of these ideas part of your pre-homework routine.

1 Fidget toys.
Fidgeting may help some children concentrate. Spinners, putty, stress balls or fidget cubes may do the trick. In one study, sixth graders who used stress balls increased their average writing scores by 10 percentage points. (Those with ADHD saw an even bigger boost—of 27%!)

2 Outdoor time.
If your child has ADHD, let her play outside before sitting down to homework. Research has indicated that children with ADHD concentrate better after engaging in outdoor activities in green spaces—and one study showed that children scored higher on tests after encountering nature in a city park than they did after walking through an urban or residential area with less vegetation and more built structures.

3 Chewing gum.
When psychologists at St. Lawrence University put students through a series of cognitive tasks, like solving logic puzzles and reciting numbers backward, those who chewed gum for five minutes beforehand outperformed those who didn’t.



Backpacks We ♥



CONSERVATION COOL
Available in six prints, the fabric is made from recycled water bottles—personalize it for free!
GARNET HILL ECO SIGNATURE BACKPACK, \$50, GARNETHILL.COM



HARDY HOLDALL
Water-repellent and durable, with a lunch pack loop, this large-capacity style has a tip-resistant base, so it stays upright.
LANDS’ END CLASSMATE MEDIUM BACKPACK, \$39, LANSEND.COM



PRESCHOOL PERFECT
Pick from 27 animals, each with adorable extras (a unicorn horn, puppy ears). This small bag has an insulated snack pouch.
SKIPHOP ZOO LITTLE KID BACKPACK, \$20, SKIPHOP.COM





ease your kid's

BIGGEST FREAK-OUTS

Even the most confident children can feel insecure during the start of school. Here's how to support them through first-day jitters.

"I won't know anyone in my class!" "Tell your child: 'Someone in your new class is waiting to be your friend, and your job is to figure out who,'" says Eileen Kennedy-Moore, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Princeton, NJ. "Then, with younger kids, talk about clues they can look for," such as a child glancing around for company or offering to show them something—some of these signals aren't obvious to a nervous kid. When they're busy sleuthing out signs of friendliness, they'll focus less on their own discomfort.

"I'll always be bad at math." "Oh, honey, you're not bad at math" is on the tip of your tongue, but resist the urge to contradict him—he'll only dig in. Instead, help frame the problem with specifics, so it feels smaller

and possibly temporary, she says. "You're confused about exponents right now" is an external problem that can be addressed and isn't an indictment of his overall aptitude. As you two brainstorm ways of dealing, remind him to focus on progress, not perfection.

"No one else will have zits/be a foot taller/wear a bra!" Empathy is the best response, but don't dwell on the drama you went through when you were her age, says Kennedy-Moore, author of *Growing Friendships: A Kids' Guide to Making and Keeping Friends*. "I know what you're going through" can kill a conversation with tweens and teens. Instead, "describe the situation using *you*, *you*, *you*." Say, "It seems like you're feeling self-conscious" or "It sounds like you hate it when other kids comment on your body." By narrating your kid's emotions, "you're wrapping these big, messy feelings up with words, which makes them understandable," she says.



3 Tricks to Save on Supplies

It's no shock that 75% of parents say back-to-school shopping is a serious stressor, according to GH Seal star **RetailMeNot**. The company's shopping expert, Sara Skirboll, to the rescue!



Shop on tax-free days.

Many localities waive sales tax for a few days—search online for exactly when. Some tax holidays apply only to school supplies, while others cover electronics, clothing and shoes.



Wait a bit.

Sometimes the *late* bird gets the best deal—clothes and shoe prices typically drop 40% after mid-month, and class supplies can be a third less by the second week of September.



Get social.

Brands like Kohl's, Old Navy and Macy's usually offer deep discounts, while others offer flash sale alerts to shoppers who follow them on social media.

YOU COULD
WIN A
\$1,000
SHOPPING
SPREE!

Join Pilot Pen's online loyalty program, G2 Overachievers Club, for discounts at Target and enter online for your chance to win one of three \$1,000 Target shopping sprees.

Enter at pilotsweeps.goodhousekeeping.com.
Details, page 137.

