

# Back-to-School DAYS

## How to save on school supplies



Back to school season can be as expensive for parents as it is exciting for students. Once the initial letdown of the end of summer vacation wears off, many kids are excited to return to school, where they can see their friends, study their favorite subjects and participate in extracurricular activities.

Parents of school-aged youngsters may share in that excitement while also knowing that back to school season can stretch their budgets. One of the ways to salvage those budgets is to save on school supplies. Fortunately, there are several ways parents can do just that.

- Be patient. Shopping early can save shoppers money in many instances, but parents may benefit by exercising patience when it comes to buying school supplies for their children. Teachers often give students lists of supplies they will need for each class, and parents who wait to receive such lists can avoid spending money on items their kids won't need. Even if you

wait it out, you may be able to get a head start, as some teachers may post supply lists on school websites, while others might email lists to parents before back to school season hits full swing.

- Take inventory. If you have more than one child, chances are you already have lots of school supplies around the house. Dust off kids' backpacks and study areas from last school year to determine which supplies you need to buy and which you already have. Going forward, encourage kids to store their supplies in a predetermined area once the school year ends, as this will make next year's inventory that much easier to examine and assess.

- Spend more now to save later. While inexpensive supplies can be hard to resist, such items likely won't withstand the test of time, forcing you to spend time and money each year buying replacement supplies. Paying more now for certain items, including stronger backpacks and more highly rated calculators, may end up

saving you money in the long run, even if the initial bill is somewhat tough to swallow.

- Use technology to your advantage. Department stores and businesses that sell school supplies, such as pharmacies and office stores, may or may not discount too many items once back to school season hits full swing. But savvy parents can still find deals by using technology to their advantage when shopping for school supplies. Download apps like RetailMeNot to your smartphone and enable its updates so your phone essentially notifies you of any discounts the moment you walk into a given store. If you don't receive any updates, search for discounts via the app or the Internet as you shop. Chances are strong that there are deals to be had, even if you don't learn of the deals until you arrive at the store.

School supplies can be expensive, but parents can employ several strategies to save on school supplies now and in the future.



## Make school day mornings easier



Parents can take several steps to make sure school day mornings go more smoothly.

School day mornings can be hectic, as getting kids ready for school and out the door on time is not always easy. Working parents may find school day mornings especially difficult, as their own work schedules can make mornings feel even more rushed. Fortunately, parents can employ several strategies to free up time in the morning so everyone starts their days off in a more relaxing atmosphere.

- Wake up earlier. Sleep might seem like a precious commodity, but waking up just 10 to 15 minutes earlier can remove some of the stress from weekday mornings without costing you a lot of sack time. Let kids sleep in until their normal wakeup time, using your extra 10 or 15 minutes to shower or enjoy your morning cup of coffee before the house is abuzz with activity.

- Tackle certain chores the night before. Delaying certain chores until you wake up makes for a hectic morning, so tackle as many morning chores as possible before you go to bed for the night. Prepare school lunches, lay clothes out for yourself and your children, and make sure kids have their backpacks packed and ready to go before they go to bed. Each of these things may only take a few minutes, but when left for the morning, they can add up to a substantial amount of time.

- Encourage youngsters to pick up the pace. Some people are morning people, while others dread setting their alarms for early morning hours. Kids who fall into the latter group may drag their feet in the morning, but parents should offer encouragement when kids are moving slowly in the morning. Allowing your frustration to show may only make kids less fond of mornings, so remind them as nicely as possible that everyone has a schedule to stick to if they seem to be dragging their feet.

- Keep the television off. If watching the television is ingrained in your morning routine, try going a few days without it to see if this makes it easier to get out the door on time. Kids might grow distracted by morning cartoons, and even adults may get caught up in morning news shows or other forecasts. Eliminating television from your morning routine can save time and also may help your family grow closer, as you will have more distraction-free time to speak to one another. In addition to turning off the television, resist the urge to turn on your devices or scan work emails when getting ready in the morning.

Parents know that school day mornings can be hectic. But there are several ways to make such mornings go more smoothly so everyone gets where they need to be on time.

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