



Save on back-to-school clothes shopping

The back to school season can be bittersweet. Parents may miss having their youngsters around the house when summer officially ends, but it's also fun for parents to watch kids partake in all that school has to offer.

One of the things few parents look forward come the end of summer vacation is back-to-school shopping. Such shopping can be costly, especially when it's time to outfit kids with new wardrobes. While a complete wardrobe overhaul might not be necessary, kids typically need to replace a few items they've outgrown since the start of summer break. There are several ways parents

can save on back-to-school clothes.

* Get a head start. Parents can save themselves some money by shopping early for their children's back-to-school wardrobes. Though kids may experience a growth spurt during the summer, shop for items, like socks, that they aren't likely to grow out of before the back-to-school season begins. This affords you time to comparison shop and spread out the cost of replacing your child's wardrobe instead of being hit with one big bill all at once.

* Establish a budget. Without a budget, it's easy for parents to overspend on back-to-school clothing,

especially for those parents who wait until the last minute and simply buy the first things they see. Establish a budget, ideally several weeks before your child's first day of school. Having a budget in place reduces the likelihood that you will overspend, and developing the budget early helps you spread out your spending.

* Shop at consignment stores. Consignment stores offer name-brand clothing at discounted prices, something parents of ever-growing youngsters can appreciate. Kids will like the name-brand gear, while Moms and Dads will enjoying not having to pay name-brand prices. A consignment

store with significant inventory might sell anything from blue jeans and T-shirts to sneakers, shoes and jackets.

* Swap clothes with other families. Clothing swaps between families have grown increasingly popular as more and more parents look to save money on rising clothing costs for their kids. Typically, families will swap clothes, including jackets, if their kids are similar in age and one youngster has outgrown his or her clothes. If you can't find a family to swap with, visit your local community center or church to see if it has a clothing swap program.

Backpack safety can prevent serious injuries

Trips and falls on the playground may account for the majority of injuries that send school children to the nurse's office. But backpacks cause their fair share of injuries as well.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates there are more than 7,300 backpack-related injuries per year. Children routinely carry more than the recommended weight in school backpacks and, compounding the problem, also carry their bags incorrectly.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and other medical agencies recommend that a child's backpack should weigh no more than 10 to 20 percent of the child's body weight. However, this figure should be adjusted based on a child's fitness level and strength. That means that the average seven-year-old second grader who weighs between 55 and 60 pounds should be carrying no more than 11 to 12 pounds in his or her backpack. A backpack that is too heavy may cause

- * red marks on the shoulders or back from the straps
- * tingling or numbness in the arms and back
- * changes in posture when wearing the backpack, and
- * pain anywhere in the back.

To compound these problems, which also may include nerve damage resulting from pressure on nerves in the shoulders, children should lighten their loads and carry backpacks correctly. The following tips are some additional ways youngsters can prevent backpack-related injuries.

* Carry only necessary items. Children should only carry what is required for that particular school day in their backpacks. If teachers routinely have students carry home many heavy books, parents can consult with the teachers to see if there are other options.

* Distribute weight evenly. Items in the backpack should be spread out to distribute the weight across the entire back. Heavier items should be at the bottom of the pack.

* Use both straps. Using only one strap shifts the backpack weight to one side, causing the back and shoulders to strain. Many orthopedists have reported treating children with back or shoulder pain as the result of carrying backpacks incorrectly.

* Choose the correct backpack size. The size of the backpack should match the scale of the child and should rest evenly in the middle of the child's back.

* Lift safely. Children should lift their backpacks by bending their knees and lifting to protect their backs.

There are some safety features parents can look for when purchasing backpacks. A padded back reduces pressure on the muscles and can be more comfortable, while compression straps make the backpack more sturdy. Additionally, reflective material on the backpack can make the child more visible to motorists.



Back-to-school party ideas



An end-of-summer party could be just what kids will enjoy prior to the start of school.

Back-to-school season is on the horizon, and many students and parents are either loving or loathing the idea of starting a new school year. For some, a party to commemorate the new school year and the end of summer is customary. Hosting a fun event for the soon-to-be students is one way to make the most of vacation time.

* Go with a theme. Maybe the theme is rulers and text books, ABCs, or science, and it can run through the decorations used, the games played, the food served, and many other aspects of the event. Consider a science experiment inspired volcano cake that is oozing strawberry jam.

* Include some educational games. Some students experience educational backsliding during summer vacation. That is why many schools have summer reading lists that educators feel promote lesson reinforcement for the coming school year. With this in mind, plan

activities around concepts children learned in school. Think about math problem relay races, art projects, reading a story and reenacting it in a play form, or science experiments using solar energy.

* Host a campout reading marathon. Encourage guests to bring sleeping bags and favorite books to a campout under the stars. Most of the time can be spent reading while breaks can be devoted to exercising, making campout snacks or telling campfire stories.

* Rent out a fun bus or truck. Since many students will be spending a good deal of time on a school bus once the new school year commences, tie into those jaunts to school by renting the services of a game bus or truck. Some vendors will park their vehicles in front of the house for an hour or more, allowing children to climb inside and enjoy themselves on play equipment or compete in video game competitions inside specialized gaming

trucks.

* Plan a group event at the beach. Spending time seaside can be educational and enjoyable at the same time. Enlist the help of a few chaperones and set up an area on the beach where kids can play and explore the wonders of nature around them. Pack picnic-type snacks or ask attendees to bring items themselves.

* Plan a trip to the school. First-time students may be anxious about what to expect during their first days of school. Having friends who are slightly older accompany younger kids to school to give a tour and show them the ropes make the experience less frightening. Afterward, meet at a pizzeria to enjoy some slices and soda.

* Host a classic pool party. Of course, some kids want to commemorate the end of summer vacation by enjoying the pool one last time. Have a classic pool party and barbecue in the yard for everyone to enjoy.



Back to School Checklist

It won't be long before a new school year begins. allPOINTS reminds parents and caregivers to be sure students receive their:

- ☒ Dental Cleaning
- ☒ Immunizations
- ☒ Athletic Physicals
- ☒ Mouth Guards

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