

By Chéla Wallace

**Y**ou did your research, talked to other parents of twins/multiples and found a great preschool for your children. It will be the first school experience for all of you, and you are filled with questions: "Are my children ready? What if they cry? What if I cry? What do I need to buy? Should my twins/multiples be in the same class? What if my children are the first in the world to not make it in preschool?" All these questions and more go through most parents' minds...and everyone, (including parents) survive.

As you prepare your twins for preschool, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Should the children be in the same class?** This concern is unique to parents of twins/multiples. Keeping your children together is usually a good idea, as it can make separation from the parent easier. After the children settle in, they often gravitate to the activities they enjoy most and don't stay together the entire class time. As the year goes by, the teacher can help the children find their own way by seating them apart and by directing them into different play areas.



- **Arrange some play dates with friends.** This will help the children adjust to being apart from you. Start with a very short time, as little as 15 minutes (using a kitchen timer to make this more concrete). Even if they cry, leave with a kiss and a smile. The quick return will help them learn you always come back.

- **If you can, visit the preschool, meet the staff and ask to look around.** At the least, drive by the school, point it out and talk about the coming year. This helps create a sense

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of ownership for the children. Find out the teacher's name and talk about the things your children will be doing in class: "Teacher Susan will have so many fun things for you to do when you go to school: Play-Doh, painting and singing lots of songs."

- **Get a list of things your children need for school and go shopping together.** Kids love to help pick out their school supplies, especially their backpacks (and lunch boxes, if needed). Your children will feel they have a hand in getting ready for their big adventure!

- **Make a contact list.** With their permission, make a list of the names and phone numbers of friends and relatives whom your children know and whom the school can contact in case of an emergency or if you are delayed and need someone else to pick up your children.

- **Be sure your children are up-to-date on immunizations.** Most states require this for all preschoolers.

- **If your children get upset when you talk about school, just let it go.**

As parents, we often think we can talk away children's anxiety, when in reality it only makes them more anxious. Always answer their questions in a positive way and reiterate that school will be fun. If you are anxious about school, your children will pick up on your stress.

- **It is important to remind your children that parents don't go to school.** Give your children some examples of things you will be doing when they are at school, such as going to the store to buy groceries. Also, talk about where other members of the family go during the day (to work or school).

- **If English is not generally spoken at home, now is a good time to start.** Having their home language is very important, but your children will feel more comfortable at school if they hear you using the language their teacher uses.

- **The big day finally arrives.** When dropping your children off at school, always walk them into class; do not carry them. Get your children seated and involved in an activity, and then leave with a smile. It will make their day go smoother. Staying doesn't make it easier for children: the longer you stay, the longer they think you will stay. It also gives children the message that you don't feel they are safe. Remind your children the teacher will take good care of them and that you will return soon.

It generally takes about three weeks for children to get comfortable with the new environment and new teachers. Remember, separation anxiety is very normal and most children soon ease into the new schedule. At the beginning of the school year, you'll wonder how to fill all your new-found free time. By winter break, you'll wonder why preschool is so short! As we all know, the childhood years fly by too fast. Enjoy it because before you know it, you'll be applying to colleges! ♥