

Heading to School on Peaceful Terms:

Easing your way out of the house with preschoolers

by Kelly Rush • *Preschool Life* • www.PreschoolLife.com

If raising your voice and rushing your child to the car is a familiar scene as you head to school or childcare, you're not alone. If you want to make a change, try following some of these tips to ease your child out the door on more peaceful terms.

- **Have a routine for breakfast that your child expects.** This will avoid arguing over choices and wasting time scanning the refrigerator and cupboards.
- **Have your child get dressed before certain privileges.** Whether they anxiously awake to watch cartoons, or play with their favorite truck, this is a good first-things-first discipline for young children to practice.
- **Tell your child the plan for the day in small pieces.** Use terms your child will understand, such as, "You get to go to school today! First you'll eat breakfast. Then, after you get dressed and watch Blues Clues, it will be time to get in the car." Give them updates after each event as to how much time they have before leaving home.
- **If your child has a special toy to take in the car, place it in front of the door.** By placing the toy in this special 'don't forget' spot, it keeps your child from carrying it around the house and being distracted when it's time to put on their coat, go potty, or when you need their cooperation for last-minute grooming.
- **Be careful not to condition your child to being told six times to do one thing, like putting on shoes.** Surely, they will begin to think they don't need to take you seriously until the sixth time. Rather, oversee your child putting on their shoes after being told the first time.

Make your instructions clear and clarify that it was heard, then instruct your son or daughter to let you know when the shoes are on. This sends a clearer message to your child that you have an expectation, and that they have a mission to complete.

- **Set a kitchen timer.** Use it to alert everyone that it's time to leave.
- **Start with the end in mind.** The typical stress of rushing out the door is usually caused by the last-minute little things. Is it your child's snack day? Put it in the car as soon as you can. Will the baby need a sippy cup for the ride? Fill it and set it in the car seat early on, etc.
- **Plan to arrive at the mini-van convention early.** In a life with small children; 'on time' means allowing for your kiddo to get a seatbelt unbuckled, the backpack gathered, stopping to complain that their shoe has a rock in it, or less-than-perfect cooperation from them or a younger sibling.
- **Set the tone for the morning.** Be happy yourself and speak to your children in a calm manner and an encouraging attitude.
- **Be careful what you expect of your child.** No matter how advanced your little-one is in many areas, children this age do not comprehend urgency. More than likely, being rushed or yelled at will slow them down even more.

Getting young ones ready for the day and out the door is a challenging task, but careful preparation, a few extra minutes and a patient attitude can go a long way to make your morning routine a positive experience for your family—and for you.

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