

Transition Tips: After the Holidays

Supporting a successful transition back to school after the holidays for autistic students



1. Try to keep sleeping patterns to the same routine as much as possible during the holiday break. Return to typical bedtime hours at least 3 days prior to the start of school, regardless of the age of your child/youth.
2. Remember to create a bedtime routine that includes quiet calming activities like bathing, reading a book, and mindful activities before bed. Reduce screen time at least 2 hours beforehand, if possible.
3. Use a [calendar](#) to mark the return to school so your child/youth can predict how their schedule will change in the coming days.
4. After the holidays, your house may change again when you put decorations away. This may be a difficult change, especially if some of your decorations include preferred characters or items. Consider leaving those up until near the end of the holiday, and include your child/youth in taking things down and deciding where to put them.
5. Consider introducing a [visual schedule](#) of the day, if you haven't been using one over the holidays, to help your child/youth be more aware of what they will be doing each day. Eventually, add in some learning activities in preparation for school starting.
6. Talk about your child/youth's school, teachers, and peers. Show pictures of them if you have them, refamiliarizing your child/youth with people and places they will be going back to. Drive by the school and talk about it.
7. If your child/youth has gotten a new toy or is interested in a new character or game, be sure to share this information with your child's/youth's teachers. Knowing your child's/youth's new interests or preferences is very helpful, as they can be incorporated in learning activities and used to help develop friendships with peers.
8. If you have time, consider creating a short journal entry with your child/youth, using words or pictures to describe what they did over the break. Share this entry with their teacher.
9. A few days in advance of the start of school, start to plan what your child/youth will need to have ready the morning of the first day back. Prepack their knapsack, having them participate in choosing what will go inside. Pick a location in your home close to the doorway where it can be placed and kept each day. Consider including this in their visual schedule.
10. Create a [social story](#) about returning to school, highlighting what your child/youth enjoys at school and identifying strategies they use as a reminder of what to do when feeling overwhelmed. Have this on hand and review it a few days in advance of school.

