

Preparing for Extended Breaks from School: Tips for Families

Extended breaks away from school typically means extra time at home with family. Many times home settings are naturally less structured than school and some children may have difficulty adjusting to this change. Here are some tips to help create a successful break:

1. **Create as much predictability as possible.** Children crave routines. Try to discuss as a family an overall game plan of events. You can create a calendar that displays upcoming events, when family is visiting, as well as any upcoming travel plans.
2. **Plan daily activities in advance.** Go into a school break with a plan that includes daily activities. Rather than allow for spontaneity during school breaks (which could lead to arguing between siblings), show your children the planned schedule in advance: They'll know what to look forward to each day, and you'll be sure that there is something formal happening that will keep them engaged. You will want to make sure you plan things your children will be happy doing? Sit down with them before the school break and ask them how they'd like to spend it.
3. **You can also create a list or visual schedule of activities for each day.** Schedules may include: time to work on school activities/lessons, time at home to play, family meals, chores, run errand, etc. Provide reminders to signify when transitioning from one activity to another activity. Using a timer (kitchen or cell phone timer) can be helpful in cueing a transition.
4. **Provide Downtime or Leisure Activities.** If you are out and about bring along a few preferred activities for your child. You can even offer these preferred activities/outings after completing any required errands.
5. **Arrange a Quiet Space for your child.** If you are traveling or having family visit, arrange a space for your child if he/she are feeling overwhelmed, overstimulated, or just need a break. Bringing along some preferred and familiar toys can help.
6. **Having your Child Involved.** Have your child part of the planning and prep work if possible. Give him/her small jobs, such as placing the napkins on the table or collecting coats so they can help out.
7. **Reward your Child for Positive Behavior.** Remember to praise and reward your child for positive and appropriate behavior. Try to arrange some times that they will have your undivided attention.