

4. Affirm and encourage children's efforts to adjust to change. "You can be proud of being brave enough to meet new friends at school. You're learning to be a flexible, friendly person. I admire that."
5. Establish routines children can trust. Kids thrive on predictable time schedules. Before leaving, tell children when you'll come back for them. Describe the time in a way they'll understand. For instance, with young children say, "I'll pick you up after you eat your after-nap snack."
6. Provide security and stability. Keep to your promised time schedule so children learn you're dependable and reliable. If you HAVE to be late, call and ask a teacher to inform and reassure your child. Being late should be a last resort, not a regular occurrence. Chronic late pick-ups tell children they aren't a high priority.
7. Make drop off time calm and relaxing. A smooth walk across the bridge from home to child care or school is your goal, not a hectic mad dash to an invisible finish line. Comforting good-byes require good time management.
8. Pack and organize what you can the night before so mornings can include meaningful talking or cuddling together. Enjoy the time with your child, rather than rushing around as they get ready for school and you get ready for work. Avoid saying over and over, "Hurry up, slow poke, I'm late. I've got to get to work on time."
9. Arrive in the morning when an adult can spend individual time greeting your child. Arrive early enough so your child can easily join into play groups. Avoid arriving during morning meetings, circle times, or when structured activities have started. Instead of making them comfortable, the interruption puts too much focus on your child and can make them shy and embarrassed.

Think of meaningful, creative ways to help kids *feel the connection* between you even when you're apart.

10. Leave children with comfort items, such as a teddy bear or favorite blanket. Think of meaningful, creative ways to help kids *feel the connection* between you even when you're apart. Some children wear a locket with a photo of their family in it. Others post a family portrait in their cubby or carry one in their backpack.
11. En route to school or child care, anticipate the good things that will happen. Whenever possible, relate it to on-going events. For instance, wonder out loud if the guppy in the classroom aquarium will have her babies soon. Ask what kind of building might be created in the sandbox.
12. Make sure a caregiver is on hand to help your child become engaged in activity before you leave. Soothing and relaxing activities, such as playing with clay, building with blocks, or playing in a water table are great ways to ease children into the classroom environment.
13. Give your child a sense of involvement. For instance, they can help decide where you'll say good-bye. At the door or at their cubby? Will they wave from a window or blow you a kiss through the door's keyhole? Will you share a secret handshake or a knowing wink?

Because each child is unique, some will have rockier adjustments to separation than others. If that applies to your child, turn to the *Parenting Exchange* archive library for more tips on coping with children's separation anxiety.

For More Information...

about creative parenting ideas, check out the Parenting Exchange Library at www.ChildCareExchange.com.

- **Separation Anxiety Category** • *More Tips to Cope With Separation Anxiety*
- *Persistent Separation Problems Pose Tough Choices* ■ **Back to School or Child Care Category** • *Help Children Cope With Start of Child Care or School*
- **Pets & Children Category** • *Parents Can Help Children Cope with Pet Death*

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