



MAKING SCHOOL DROP-OFF EASIER

Congratulations!

By downloading this guide, you have already taken the first step toward making school drop-off easier. That's good news! But don't stop there!

YOUR NEXT STEP:

Decide to spend 15 minutes to create your own personal action plan right now!

This step-by-step guide has been designed to be completed in 15 minutes or less. When you have gone through all the steps you will have in your hand your own personal action plan for making school drop off easier.

How to use this guide:

On the following page are seven steps for you to follow. These steps guide you through how to use the five key areas below to fill out your action plan template.

Five key areas that you can focus on that will transform how you start your school day:

1. **Observe** your child's behaviour and understand what they are trying to communicate
2. **Identify** the best questions to ask your child so that you can understand how they are feeling
3. **Set clear expectations** for your children, with timing, words and photos
4. **Questions** to ask your child's class teachers
5. **Create a plan** and set up support for your child.

The 1% Rule:

The 1% rule states that if you get just 1% better every day, you will see phenomenal improvements in a very short space in time. This is because the benefits compound exponentially. In just three months you will have improved by 150%. At the one-year mark you will be nearly 38 times better! Our goal is therefore to make just ONE thing a tiny little bit easier. This small change only results in a small benefit but is the start of a transformational process.



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Steps for creating your own personal action plan to make school drop off easier!

- Step 1:** *Grab a cup of tea or coffee and sit down with pages 3-5 of this guide, the section entitled “How to identify anxiety associated with getting ready for school and school drop-off” Allow yourself 10 minutes to read it through.*
- Step 2:** *What is the biggest challenge faced when helping your child get ready for school? It helps to set one goal at a time, and it is rewarding if you start with something significant. If the most challenging behaviour is too daunting to tackle first, focus on a change that will work with your child’s strengths. For example: if your child is a visual learner and struggles to understand everything that they are responsible for doing before school, try a visual schedule. This will help set both of you up for success and will have a huge impact on how motivated everyone is to continue to work together as a team.*
- Step 3:** *You have chosen the behaviour you would like to focus on. What questions would you like to ask your child? Pick two or three and try to find five minutes when your child is calm and happy to take part in a conversation. Ask your child if it’s ok to take notes!*
- Step 4:** *Are there any questions you could ask your child’s teacher that may help? Try and set some time aside to speak to your child’s teacher, and explain the challenges you face at drop off, and that you’re working on a plan to make the start of the school day more positive. Pick one or two questions from the list that will help you.*
- Step 5:** *Think about what a great morning drop-off would look like. Does your child know what they should do? Can they do each individual task? Do they know your expectations? Can they do each of the tasks on their own? Take 5 minutes when your child is relaxed and check in with them. Are they confident with doing up their shirt buttons? Would they be less anxious if they put their uniform out the night before? Would a breakfast menu take the pressure off having to decide what to eat? E.g. Monday’s = Cornflakes, Tuesday’s = toast with strawberry jam.*
- Step 6:** *Create a morning schedule, checklist, or plan for your child. Have a box at the end for a sticker, star, or affirmation... “Congratulations! You did it!” Allow the opportunity to give feedback on each step. For example, “You did 5 out of 7 steps! That’s a huge improvement!” Rewarding effort and improvement is both important and motivating. Do a dry run or rehearsal if you can. Check that your child can do each of the tasks in the time you have allocated for each task.*
- Step 7:** *Trial your new strategies for a week. How did it go? Check in with your child, your child’s teacher and the rest of your family. What worked well? What could change? Plan something to do together to celebrate your hard work! It doesn’t have to involve toys, or rewards...perhaps a visit to a favourite park, or beach or a family game of Monopoly!*



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How to identify anxiety associated with getting ready for school and school drop-off:

Remember: the five key areas that you can focus on that will transform how you start your school day:

1. **Observe** your child's behaviour and understand what they are trying to communicate
2. **Identify** the best questions to ask your child so that you can understand how they are feeling
3. **Set clear expectations** for your children, with timing, words and photos
4. **Questions** to ask your child's class teachers
5. **Create a plan** and set up support for your child.

Key Area 1. Observe: *All behaviour is a form of communication... what does your child's behaviour say?*

Behaviour	What your child is trying to say about getting ready for school...	Tips to help
Refusal – to get ready/get out of the car	I don't feel secure without you (acceptance)	Create good communication with your teacher, and secondary teacher.
	I don't know what is expected of me	Suggest that a visual schedule of the day's activities with times be put up in the classroom.
	The noise, other children, make me anxious/ I have poor sleep which effects mood and concentration.	Have a calm space/tent in the classroom or bring earmuffs or headphones for your child. Talk to your child's teacher about giving them a responsibility (like going to the office) to give your child a break from the noise and activity. Speak to your Paediatrician about sleep and investigate what may help.
Interrupting Expressing yourself is important but timing is key	I want to avoid doing this...it's too overwhelming and there's too much to do	Getting "ready" involves dozens of steps! Use tools that help your child get ready independently, such as a morning schedule.
	I'm worried I'll forget or won't be understood	Write it on a post it! Record your words! Discuss the ideas when everyone is ready.
Inappropriate language or rudeness	I'm frustrated	Remain calm. Use fewer words. Ask for what needs to happen. Talk about language and respect later that day.
	I want to avoid something or gain control	Minimise attention and redirect towards getting ready. As a parent, continue doing what you need to do. Give lots of attention and gratitude to reward cooperation.
Emotional behaviour	I'm anxious – what can I do well? I don't feel confident	Draw up a chart of what your child does well. Put a star every time your child accomplishes something. Don't forget to include small things if they are important to your child.
	I'm anxious about speaking in a group and working together as part of a group	Create a list of questions around asking for help, personal space, taking turns. Practice at home.
Repetitive behaviours – e.g. flapping, clicking, jumping	I'm anxious and need sensory feedback	Allow a few minutes, in a safe space, and encourage your child to do what makes them feel better, safely. Make them feel included by joining in!
	I'm trying to calm myself down by getting rid of anxiety	After allowing time and space, ask a couple of open-ended questions and see what you can do to help.
Competitive behaviours	Being first means "I am good" so I have to win!	Reward effort, and staying calm, rather than achievement. If other siblings are always first, ask them to help and encourage their sibling (but not do everything).
	I'm anxious because I'm different	Discuss how everyone is different! Difference is good.
Meltdown	I can't cope	Help your child calm down in a safe, quiet space.
	I'm tired/overwhelmed/frustrated/too much sound and activity	Reduce sound and activity...your child could use different rooms at different times, wear headphones, change lighting, wear sunglasses.



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Key Area 2: Identify *the best questions to ask your child...*

The best questions to ask your child don't allow one-word answers. The best questions also position your child as the knowledge expert, so they will always have something to say. Great questions can help very young and non-verbal children to express their answers using colours, pictures, emotional faces. Examples of great questions, with follow up prompts are:

1.	Your child	Tell me about the best part of your school day.
2.		What is the hardest part of your school day? <i>Why? Let's write down some ideas to see if we can help make your day better!</i>
3.	Inside the classroom	What colour would indicate how you feel about the children at your table? (Red = angry or frustrated, yellow = they're ok, green = good, I like my group) <i>Why?</i> You could use emoticons and ask your child to explain their choice.
4.		What is your teacher's most important rule? <i>Why is it important to you? What's the least important rule and why?</i> (This question may provide you with feedback if your child doesn't understand the purpose of a rule or the context of why it's important.
5.		How do you ask for help if you're not sure what's going on or what to do? <i>Who could you ask?</i>
6.	Socially	How do you join in a group? <i>How do you ask to change the rules of a game? How do you include someone new into your group?</i>
7.		How do you tell someone that you don't want to play a game, or that you'd like to play the game using different rules? <i>What is the kindest way to ask? What is the clearest way to ask?</i>
8.		Tell me about something funny that happened today or something that someone did well.
9.		What are the most popular things to do at lunch or recess?
10.		Did someone do something nice for you today? <i>What is something nice you could do?</i>

Key Area 3: Set *clear expectations for your children with timing, words and photos*

It can be surprising to know that simply getting ready for school is a process of up to 50 different steps or tasks! A phrase like "get ready" also means different things to different people, and even greater variation exists amongst children and siblings. A shopping list of tasks with times is a good way of setting responsibility, awareness, focus and independence. A schedule helps your child to understand their role within the family in getting ready in the morning. The more engaged your child is in creating the schedule, the more engaged they are likely to be in following it. It can be a Word document, with pictures or ideally photos of your child. E.g.

<i>My Morning Routine - Grade 2</i>	
	
<i>7:00am Sleep!</i>	<i>7:10am Get up and go to the toilet</i>
	
<i>7:15am Eat breakfast</i>	<i>7:45am Brush my teeth</i>



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Key Area 4: Questions to ask your child's class teachers...

Examples of great questions:

1.	How long does my child take to settle in after drop-off? Could he create something today for his family, Mum or Dad so they know he's thinking of them?
2.	Does my child communicate well? Can they tell you how they feel? Does my child have a close friend or buddy for support? What do you need from us to help you support our child at school?
3.	Is my child able to create and maintain friendships?
4.	What does my child do well? What activities or subjects keep my child engaged the most? Would sharing his likes and dislikes with you help come up with ideas to help motivate him to learn?
5.	How is my child coping emotionally? How can we use their strengths to help cope better with challenges?
6.	Could we create an escalation plan for when my child isn't coping so that they have a chance to challenge themselves, but they are supported when they're not coping at all?
7.	How does my child learn best? Do you think they like looking, listening or doing something best?
8.	What can I do at home to help my child feel positive and confident about school?
9.	Could we make any small changes to help my child cope? Could my child have the first locker in the locker room, so they are not in the middle of lots of noise and lots of activity at the end of the day?
10.	Could we have a little more information about sport's carnival programs, excursions, camps, assemblies, etc. so I can talk through these events and manage my child's expectations?

Key Area 5: Create a plan and set up support for your child

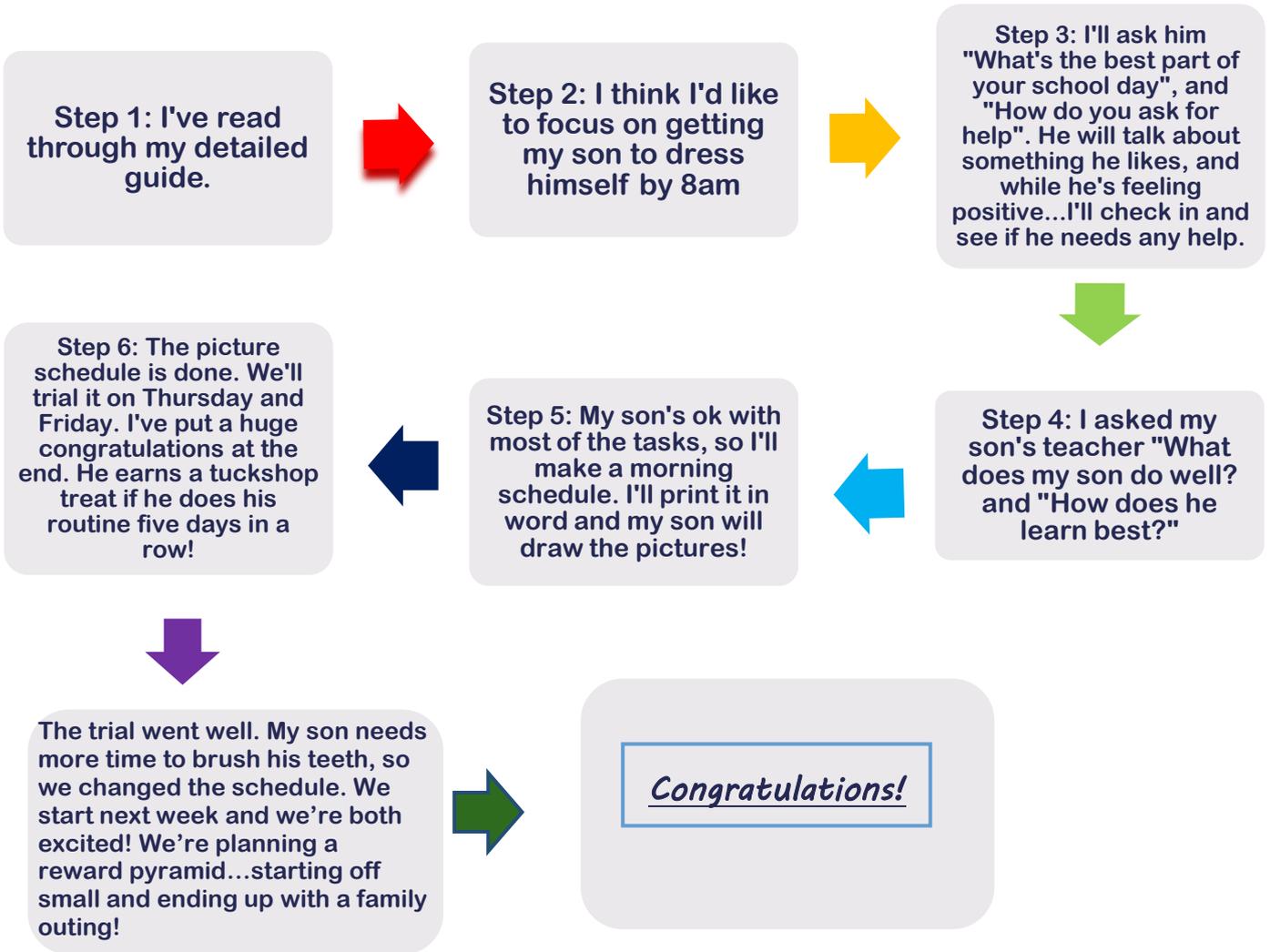
How to use this comprehensive checklist to create a plan:

- Read the five key areas and identify the information that you think will help your child.
- Set a date to start using some tips
- Prepare your morning schedule, list of questions, and involve your whole family in discussing your goal and the differences you think it will make for everyone
- Play to your child's strengths...if they like rules, being helpful, having a set role...use these to your advantage to get the morning routine done!
- Be positive and mentally prepare yourself to be calm and focused for the 90 minutes prior to school drop-off. Don't worry about the other things until after drop off is done e.g. your work day, appointments, dinner, bills that may be due.
- Set a review date to give feedback, make any small changes and to be positive about what has changed.
- Reward charts are a good way of keeping track of progress and have the additional benefit of motivating your child to continue to try something new. Try and link the reward to your child's interests and try to have the reward ready immediately after they've done something well. E.g. it could be as simple as choosing take-away food option, riding in the front seat on the way home, or having extra one-on-one time with Mum or Dad.



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Review Your Plan...





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And finally...here's a checklist to help you review your plan:

Step 1	I've read my guide. The most helpful bit was:
Step 2	Our goal is to:
Step 3	The questions I'm going to ask my child are:
Step 4	The questions I'm going to ask my child's teacher are:
Step 5	<i>I checked in with my child...and they are confident doing these tasks:</i>
Step 6	<i>My morning task list or picture schedule has a total of _____ tasks and should take _____ minutes.</i>
Step 7	<i>I need to make a total of _____ changes to my schedule. We start our first full week on ___/___/___</i>

Thank you for downloading this free Step-by-Step Guide to Making School Drop - Off Easier. We encourage you to take a moment to email us and let us know if you found the guide useful, if anything needed more explanation or detail, and if you'd recommend the guide to others. We're more than happy to answer any questions you may have to help you along the journey!

Best of luck in making school drop-off easier for your family.
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