

# Southern Cross Early Childhood School

*From little things, big things grow.*



Southern Cross Early Childhood School believes that good communication is the key to a positive start at Southern Cross.

At all stages in the process remember that all of us here at Southern Cross Early Childhood School are here to help you and your child make the best transition to school as is possible.

We are always happy to talk with you about any questions you may have.

Adapted from  
<https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary/resources-your-journey/starting-school/1-thinking-about-transition-school>

## Starting School at Southern Cross Early Childhood School

We are so excited that you have chosen for your child to join us at Southern Cross Early Childhood School. Some of our children have been coming to the child care component at Southern Cross since they were babies or have siblings here and are experts at coming here. But they are still changing rooms and working with new staff. For other children we know that it is a new school and perhaps they are a little nervous. And we know that some of our families, regardless of how long you have been coming to Southern Cross might be even more anxious than the children!

However you are feeling we want to stress that good communication is the key to a positive start. If you are worried or anxious about anything please let us know as we can reassure you and support you through the process! The good news is that there are many strategies that will help you plan and prepare for the year ahead and ensure that everyone has a positive start to the year. Every family will have different preparation ideas and strategies, so it is best to make a plan that suits your individual family. The majority of this information has come from early childhood educators, teachers and parents on the KidsMatter website at [www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au).

### Prepare for the new school day routine

There are many things that families can do before school starts to make children's transition easier. Practising changes to your daily routine will help build your child's sense of security and reduce the stress of getting to school. Hopefully you have been able to take part in one of our orientation sessions as visits to the school will help familiarise your child with the school and build their confidence.

You can practise what going to school will be like for your child using some of the following ideas. Remember that you know your child best – some children feel most confident with a lot of preparation whereas for others, too much may be overwhelming. You can tailor the techniques below to suit your child.

- Travel to and from school several times as a practice run. Try going at the usual school drop-off and pick-up times as this will help you and your child get to know what to expect (eg how busy the traffic will be, which route to take).
- Practise the school day routine. This may include the morning routine of getting up early, putting on your child's uniform and packing their school bag. Setting up a regular bedtime routine will allow your child to wake up fresh and ready for the day.

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- Practise lunch time routines. For example, you may like to set up a pretend picnic in the backyard or park. Help your child practise getting their lunchbox out of their school bag and guide them to open it by themselves. You may also assist your child with identifying what to eat for munch and crunch, lunch and snack. Think of ways you can make it easier for your child to manage their food. This may include ensuring your child can open the packaging.
- Create a visual checklist with your child. This list could include things that need to be done in the evening and morning before they leave for school.
- Taking photos of your child doing the actions for the checklist can be a fun way to learn.
- We have provided a story about Southern Cross and the fun things we do here. Read it regularly to your child and share it with family and friends.
- Walk past Southern Cross Early Childhood School on weekends. You can talk with your child about the things you can see.
- If you know other children coming to school next year arrange opportunities for your child to play with other children who will be starting as well. Seeing familiar faces will help your child feel confident and more relaxed on their first day and during the first weeks of school.



## Plan ahead for changes

Starting school is a big change for your child that can lead to a range of emotions. You may find your child is excited but they may also be exhausted and tired, even if they are used to long hours at their child care setting. Take the time to notice their mood, and think about how you will support your child to manage these feelings and reduce their stress or anxiety. Every family's strategies are different, so it can be helpful to reflect on what has helped your child manage and adapt to change in the past.

- Consider what sorts of after school activities might be helpful for your child. For some children, minimising after school activities or waiting until your child is settled into school before introducing new activities is helpful. The school day can be quite long for your child and they may not have the energy to engage in other activities. They can begin after school activities once they have adjusted into the new routine.
- Plan some relaxing time after school. Depending on your child's interests, this may consist of quiet play or jumping on the trampoline. Follow your child's lead on what works best for them.
- Help your child to get a good night's sleep. Having a regular routine such as taking a bath before bedtime and reading a book may help your child to relax.

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## Help manage separation distress

In the lead up to starting school, you may be concerned about how your child will cope with being separated from you. Perhaps they took a long time to adjust to being without you when they started attending child care or staying with another family member. You might feel a bit unsure of how they will cope in their new environment. In your planning for school, you might like to consider:

- What will help my child separate comfortably from me in the morning?
- What has helped my child in the past?
- Would my child benefit from taking a picture or special object from home?
- What will I do to help myself cope? (eg catch up with a friend, exercise, organise to have a coffee)

It will also help to:

- Make or read a story about Southern Cross Early Childhood School. Have photos around that you can use as a prompt for conversation. We will have some photos on the school website that you can use to remind children about what Southern Cross looks like and the things they will do.
- Talk to your child's school teacher – they can help to put some ideas in place to support your child to separate from you.
- Develop a positive goodbye routine together (eg sharing a 'high five', special goodbye hug or a funny or loving gesture like a bear hug).
- Always say goodbye and reassure your child of when you will collect them (eg that you will be back at home time to pick them up, or what the arrangements are for after school care). This helps build their trust and sense of security.
- Avoid lengthy goodbyes as they may increase separation distress.
- Talk positively and enthusiastically about what your child will be doing when they are away from you (eg "you will have a story", "you're going to have fun meeting new children"). Children will pick up on your cues if you are feeling nervous so try to be mindful of what you communicate about your own emotions.
- Take care of your own emotions in managing the separation.

## The night before school starts

It may be helpful to:

- Have your child's uniform or clothes laid out so it is ready to be put on in the morning.
- Assist your child to pack their school bag so it is ready for the big day.
- Stick to familiar routines as much as possible. Try to have a calm evening and allow more time to settle before bedtime if your child is feeling excited or nervous about starting school.

## On the first day

You may like to:

- Allow extra time in the morning. You may want to take photos to capture the moment!

# Southern Cross Early Childhood School



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- Help your child be on time. It can be very stressful to start the day when the other children are already there and the program has started.
- Talk positively about the day ahead on the way to school and remind your child where you will be at pick-up time.
- Manage your own anxiety. You may like to plan a relaxing activity the night before or arrange to have coffee with another parent after the school drop-off.

## At the end of the first day/week

Some children will be exhausted and some children will be full of energy. Observe your child carefully and try to support their needs. Some children will want to tell you all about their day, in detail and others may not want to say much at all.

You may like to:

- Have a small snack and water to drink ready at the end of the day to help your child re-energise.
- Remember that your child might be exhausted when they get home. Give them some down time and try not to overwhelm them with too many questions about the day. Grandparents and extended family members might need to be reminded about this too.
- Ask your child some easy questions about their day like
  - What was your favourite thing at school today?
  - What happened in the book you read?
  - What was interesting when you played outside?
- Celebrate the first day of school as it is a huge milestone to achieve. You may like to organise a special activity or dinner together as a family on the weekend to celebrate.
- Write a story with your child about Southern Cross and what happens during the day. You can draw pictures or include photographs in the story and read it together. This may help to ease their anxiety about what happens during the day. A story is also useful to share with relatives and friends.
- Read some favourite stories, do some drawing, do a puzzle, relax as a family, go to a park or have some extra-long snuggles.



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