

Adoption



Foster Care

The mission of Children's Aid Society is to identify and provide services to improve the lives of children and their families.

Post-Permanency Newsletter
Fall 2019

Tips for adoptive parents at the beginning of the school year

From the "Creating a Family" blog

Every year right about this time, children everywhere are going back to school. The lines at Walmart are long and shopping carts are full of brand new boxes of crayons and brightly colored spiral bound notebooks. As thoughts turn to school, parents of adopted kids often wonder if they need to do anything extra to make sure their child has a smooth school year.

In most respects the beginning of the school year is no different for adopted kids than for kids born into their families. We buy the school supplies and new clothes, fill out reams of paperwork, and send them off with a kiss and a prayer. But adoption can add complications at school.

Maybe your family is transracial, and you worry that your child will have to field questions.

Maybe your child's family is filled with birth parents, birth siblings, etc., and you wonder if you need to give the teacher a score card to know who is who.

Maybe your child came to you with the emotional scars and behavior of a hard life, and you are debating how much information to share with her teacher.

Maybe your child has learning differences/disabilities caused by prenatal alcohol or drug exposure, and you question if the teacher needs to know the cause in order to help.

Maybe you worry that your child is a little fuzzy



on the difference between privacy and secrecy, and perhaps has a tendency to overshare information that he may later regret telling.

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What you need to know about screen time for kids

You're sitting in a restaurant enjoying dinner when your child becomes fussy. Rather than make a scene, you hand over your phone, turn on a YouTube video, and before you know it your child is calm and entertained. Sound familiar?

With the readily available cell phones, tablets, game devices, and more, screens are not only easy to get ahold of, but also hard to avoid these days. You've probably heard the debate already: screens vs no screens. So which side is right?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that for the first 18 months, children have no screen time other than FaceTime or Skype with family members. We

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7 tips for fitting in family time

By Sarah Walker Caron

It's no secret that family time is important to parents and their kids, but fitting it in can be a challenge. Here's how to do it.

Family time is fun, important and essential to a happy, healthy family life, but how do you fit it in when everyone has stretched schedules and important commitments?

You have to start by valuing it as much as anything else in your life. Here are seven tips to help you fit it in.

1. Have family meals

Making time for family meals allows parents and their

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Tips
(from Page 1)

And then there are the dreaded school assignments that may just draw unwanted attention to the way your child joined your family.

There are negative stereotypes about adoption, and we don't want to needlessly burden your child or his teacher. On the other hand, we do want to be proactive to avoid any potential problems.

Beginning of School Checklist for Adopted Kids

If your family stands out, prepare your child to answer questions from other children.

If you want to make sure that different types of families are valued in your school, ask your child's teacher if you can come to class to read a book about different ways families are made.

If your child was adopted internationally, consider asking the teacher if you can do a lesson on that country. Hint: bringing candy from that country to share is always a hit.

Share the amount of information about your child's life that is necessary for the teacher to help your child. It is usually not necessary to share intensely personal details with the school.

If you are concerned about specific behaviors, consider talking with the school counselor in addition to the teacher.

Brainstorm ways to help your child and ask for open lines of communication.

If your child freely and proudly shared details about his adoption and life prior to coming to your family, think about whether he is oversharing details that he will later regret.

Being proud to be adopted is one thing, sharing that you were abandoned in a field or that both birthparents are in jail might be too much. Some kids need help understanding the difference between privacy and secrecy.

Ask your child's teacher if there will be school assignments that might be problematic for your child, such as creating a family tree, bringing baby pictures, or sharing early life stories.

What you need to know
(from Page 1)

understand that your family might not live close by, so videoing with them is encouraged. However, TV shows, YouTube videos, and cell phone screens should stay away during baby's first year and a half.

For toddlers, the AAP recommends educational or high-quality programs you can watch together.

Just like you would read a book with your child, it's important to be there during these programs. You can ask questions and engage with your child, such as:

"What do you think he's going to do next?"
"What color house is that?"

Watching a program with your child allows you to become the narrator or teacher and use it as a learning experience!

When it comes to your child's early development, it's much more important to learn human interactions than the newest iOS system. Learning how to respond to others, eye contact, back-and-forth exchanges, and other social skills are learned through activities and play with other people, rather than by watching someone on a two-dimensional screen. Not to mention, children are much more likely to move around and explore the environment when they're not sitting in front of a screen. Getting up and playing, either by themselves or with others, fosters creativity on top of developing communication, motor, and sensory skills.

We understand there will be screen time, but not all screens are created equal. Like we said before, give them something educational. Apps that promote creativity can be a great alternative. There are open-ended apps that allow children to make decisions and learn throughout the game or task. These interactive apps let your children create content on their own rather than just sitting and watching.

It's also ok to watch a program for entertainment! Kids deserve to relax in front of a show, just like you. Just remember to set guidelines, such as time limits, and make sure these programs are child friendly and high quality.



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Families self-refer by calling the SWAN Helpline (800-585-SWAN) to request these services. The services are part of a continuum of services that strengthen and support families and assist in strengthening the special needs adoption community at the local level.

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(no class Oct. 31)

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- Children from the System
- Raising Children from the System
- Understanding Hurt Children
- The Impact of Loss on Children
- Helping a Child to Become Part of Your Family

814-765-2686 X204 | adoption@childaid.org
(Sign up no later than Sept. 27)



and including the children in the process is a great way to have family time," says Shnieka Johnson, an arts and education independent consultant based in NYC.

2. Schedule it

Set aside dedicated time for the family — and make it a must-attend for everyone. "If you don't prioritize family time, it won't happen. It has to be like a job, with specific hours that never change. Otherwise, it becomes a lesser priority — scheduled around other activities — and quickly falls off the calendar altogether," says Eibhlin ("Eileen") Morey MacIntosh, a mom in Concord, NH.

3. Golf together

Golfing together is a great way to spend time together.

"It provides uninterrupted family time outdoors and is also a great way to spend quality time with your family (and friends!)," says Tim Shaw of Golin-Harris.

But if 18-holes isn't your thing, mini-golfing can provide a good family-time experience, too.

4. Make it part of your work commitment

Work often comes between families and family time — and with reason: having a job is a must for supporting your family, but building your necessary family-time commitment into your work schedule can help.

"Having a firm, set schedule — like 'the kids have soccer on Wednesdays, and Fridays are our family nights' — keeps work demands from trampling family time. Bosses will try to override this anyway. If they try to break your existing agreement (and they will), they need to be reminded that it's a contract like any other," says

MacIntosh.

5. Ditch the technology

Technology is a good thing, but when it comes to family time, it's a colossal distraction. Banning it from family time is a great way to help your family focus on one another. "Family dinner time is sacred in our home. No TV. No texting. No answering our home phone. We talk. Share. Laugh. And connect," says Cate O'Malley, a mom of two and writer of Sweetnicks.com.

6. Share traditions

Hearing about where you came from is a great way to share a sense of dimension and history with your kids. Just make sure you aren't rehashing the same story again and again. "Family traditions should be part of every family time, too. Don't make it a long-winded 'good ol' days' kind of tale the kids have heard 20 times. Instead, do tell a brief, relevant anecdote about your childhood or a family tradition so your children get a stronger sense of their shared heritage," says MacIntosh.

7. Make it part of the ordinary

Who says that family time has to be something new, different or unusual? It can be something simple that you'd do anyway.

"Remember that family time doesn't have to mean doing something out-of-the-ordinary. Making dinner, folding laundry or even cleaning up toys can be family time — just spend it together, talking or playing games. Folding laundry is a great time to play peek-a-boo behind shirts and towels, and making dinner is a fun time to look at pictures in cookbooks and get ideas for future meals," says Carolina Moore of www.AlwaysExpectMoore.com

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