

NEWSLETTER

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SCHOOL'S STARTING!

The days start getting longer, the fall flowers bloom. It hits you: summer's almost over and SCHOOL IS STARTING soon.

Parents have three tasks to do:

- o Get the kids OUTFITTED--clothes, shoes, supplies.
- o Get the kids psyched up--be sure they know how important school is to them and that you EXPECT THE BEST from them at school.
- o Prepare the children for "winter bedtime"--no more staying up until 11pm.

I feel strongly that children should have a fixed bedtime on school nights. And this should be preceded by a quiet hour to prepare the children for sleep. Bedtime rituals are important for all of us to prepare our bodies for sleep. It probably didn't matter so much when we lived in caves--we went to sleep when it got dark (or the fire went out). But in the artificial light in which we all live today changing to pajamas, brushing our teeth, and turning down the bed alert our brains and bodies that sleep is next.

At our house we relaxed the bedtime rule on Friday and Saturday. The children could stay up a couple of hours later. This was a time for little family projects like baking cookies or wrapping presents.

But we had a special Sunday night bedtime ritual called "Getting Ready for the Week Ahead." I got out the calendar and we discussed with the children what was coming up: dentist appointment, school play, etc. to remind and prepare them. This was followed by the getting-ready-for-bed routine. And because we considered Sunday a school night the children went to bed at the usual time.

OK. You've had summer bedtimes for two months, it's late August, school starts next week. What do you do?

A week or so before school starts I would remind the kids with great enthusiasm (to counter their groans) " ALL SCHOOL KIDS ALL HAVE TO GO TO BED EARLY SO THEY CAN GET UP IN TIME FOR SCHOOL!

I always resumed the school bedtime a few days before the actual day to

give my children a chance to adjust.

Kids not sleepy? Recite the rule: On a school night you must stay quietly in bed until you fall asleep. They protest? Remind them it's a rule.

I admit I am compulsively strict about bedtime on a school night. Our world is structured on an eight-to-five model. All children, including the "owls" have to get up at an early hour to go to school. The child who is too sleepy or hungry to function at school is not well served by the parents.