

NYC Back-to-School Checklist for Parents 2026

A practical one-page plan for a calmer first week.

NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS FIRST DAY

Thursday, September 10, 2026, for 3-K through grade 12. Confirm dates directly with your child's school: charter, private, parochial, early-childhood, and family-childcare programs may follow different calendars.



START WITH THE ESSENTIALS

1 Camps are learning-first

- ☐ Add first day, orientation, closures, and early dismissals to your calendar.
- ☐ Confirm bell time, arrival entrance, commute, and pickup person.
- ☐ Arrange before-school care, childcare, or after-school coverage.
- ☐ Update school accounts, emergency contacts, and pickup permissions.

2 Finish forms and health items

- ☐ Review school-required health records, physicals, and immunization documents.
- ☐ Submit medication, inhaler, allergy, or other care forms if needed.
- ☐ Confirm health, learning, or developmental accommodations and supporting paperwork.
- ☐ Keep copies of important forms and school contacts in one place.

3 Buy only what is needed

- ☐ Start with the official school supply list and dress-code requirements.
- ☐ Check what still fits and works before buying new items.
- ☐ Prepare a backpack, lunch container, water bottle, weather layer, and comfortable shoes.
- ☐ Label jackets, lunch gear, folders, headphones, and water bottles.

4 Reset routines gradually

- ☐ Move bedtime and wake-up time earlier in small steps.
- ☐ Practice school-day meals, screen-time limits, and morning readiness.
- ☐ Do one trial run of the route, drop-off, bus, subway, or carpool plan.
- ☐ Create a front-door "launch pad" for bags, shoes, coats, and papers.

5 Simplify meals and snacks

- ☐ **Choose:** packed lunch, school meals, or a mix of both.
- ☐ Use familiar foods and a short rotation for the first week.
- ☐ Make sure children can open containers independently.
- ☐ Check school allergy, snack, and water-bottle policies.

6 Prepare for big feelings

- ☐ **Ask:** "Are you wondering about lunch, your teacher, or getting there?"
- ☐ Make a simple plan for who your child can ask for help.
- ☐ Keep drop-offs and goodbyes clear, calm, and predictable.
- ☐ **Normalize mixed emotions:** excitement and worry can happen together.



ADJUST THE PLAN BY AGE

Preschool & Kindergarten

- ☐ Practice short goodbyes and classroom drop-off.
- ☐ Work on bathroom, backpack, and lunch-container independence.
- ☐ Pack labeled spare clothes.

Elementary School

- ☐ Set a simple system for folders, homework, and school papers.
- ☐ Review lunch, pickup, friendships, and after-school plans.
- ☐ Keep routines easy for your child to follow.

Middle School

- ☐ Plan for changing classes, multiple teachers, devices, and assignments.
- ☐ Choose one paper or digital system to track work.
- ☐ Discuss independence, transit, and phone expectations.

Teens

- ☐ Talk through schedules, commute, workload, sleep, and activities.
- ☐ Encourage ownership of tasks, with regular first-month check-ins.
- ☐ Leave room for downtime before adding commitments.



THE NIGHT BEFORE

Set up a smoother morning

- ☐ Lay out clothes and shoes.
- ☐ Pack required school items.
- ☐ Check forms and medication supplies.
- ☐ Confirm the lunch plan.
- ☐ Fill the water bottle.
- ☐ Charge devices and headphones.
- ☐ Reconfirm arrival and dismissal.
- ☐ Set alarms for a calm departure.
- ☐ End with one supportive check-in.

Choose fall programs thoughtfully

Start with what will make your child's week more manageable—not the fullest calendar.

- ☐ Consider interest, academic needs, schedule, location, and energy level.
- ☐ Try one priority or a short session before committing to more.
- ☐ Leave room to adjust after the first two weeks.