



## How to handle a bumpy start

<https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/families/enewsletter/how-handle-bumpy-start>

Bumps along the road to primary school are as common as stars in the sky. By boosting your child's ability to solve problems and cope with challenges - before, during and after they start school - you can reduce the likelihood and intensity of any issues that do crop up. And to really tackle problems head on, be sure to ask for extra support when you need it!

### Build their problem solving skills

Young kids need lots of support learning to problem-solve, and lots of practice to hone this life-skill. You and your child can resolve day-to-day challenges by using these three steps:

- Identify the problem - Try and resist the urge to solve the problem for them. Instead, listen actively and help them describe what's going on if they don't have the words.
- Try out solutions - Brainstorm together, strongly encouraging their input, and come up with some solutions that might work for the scenario.
- Check in - After they've had a chance to put their plan into action, ask your child whether it worked. Praise their efforts, whatever the outcome.

For more detail, see our Starting School resource on [problem solving](#).

### Build their coping skills

The transition to school draws heavily on a child's coping skills - that is, what they think and do in the face of difficult situations. As with problem solving, coping skills need practice. Your child will be better able to roll with the punches if you:

- listen to them and talk things through (eg "Why don't you tell me what's bothering you and I'll see if I can help?")
- provide comfort and reassurance (eg "This is a scary time for you, but it will be okay")
- encourage their efforts to cope (eg "You tried really hard to be brave and I'm proud of you")
- acknowledge and validate their feelings (eg "I can see you're really hurt and I can understand why you would feel that way")
- model good coping skills yourself (eg "I'm so sad at the moment, but I know the feeling will pass soon")

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- prepare them for new (and possibly challenging) situations by talking about them (eg "You will be starting school in a few weeks. Let's go and see what cool toys they have in your new classroom")
- work with them to develop a helpful thinking style that makes them feel good about themselves (eg "You didn't get it right at first, but you should be proud that you had a go and will now know for next time")
- encourage them to ask for assistance if they need it (eg "You know you can ask your lovely new teacher for help when I'm not there, right?")
- support them to manage strong [emotions](#) like [fears and worries](#) and [anger](#), if they are getting in the way of coping.

Our Starting School resource [Coping skills for children](#) has additional information.

Ask for help if you need it

There are no prizes for suffering in silence if your child is having problems starting school. Prevention is always better than cure, so put your hand up as early as possible. 'Help' comes in many forms, for example, you could:

- speak to your child's teacher about your concerns - the school may have some good information and support services
- look at some written or online resources - ask anyone in your circle for their recommendations
- chat with a friend - talking about things with a trusted person is sometimes all the support you need
- speak to a professional - your GP is a great place to start, or you may know a psychologist you can talk to.

Don't forget that most behavioural and emotional issues around starting school are completely commonplace and tend to be short-lived. Our resource has some extra ideas to do with [getting help when starting school](#).

