

# Crying at Drop-Off — Perfecting the Preschool Separation

<https://www.whattoexpect.com/toddler/starting-preschool/problems/drop-off.aspx>

Preschool separation anxiety is common, not that that's any comfort when you have a clinger on your hands...or around your neck. Try these tear-taming tips for an easier preschool good-bye each day.

Are there waterworks at preschool drop-off no matter what the weather? An occasional meltdown might mean your pint-sized pupil is coming down with a virus or didn't get enough sleep. If this is a daily preschool problem though, it could signal some preschool separation anxiety, which is par for the classroom course — especially for kids who've never spent time away from home without a parent. Other reasons: Your child may need more time adjusting, or transitions (like the preschool good-bye) aren't her thing. Not to stress. With some patience, your little one will get into the swing of school, and drop-off will become less dramatic. Until then, you can:

- **Check in with the teacher.** Most kids who cry at drop-off turn off the tears right after the preschool good-bye. To make sure that's the case, ask the teacher over the phone or by e-mail. If she says all is well after preschool drop-off, then it's the tricky transition talking. If, instead, your little one isn't enjoying school at all (she seems stressed by the mere mention of school), it may be that she's not ready for preschool, or she needs a different kind of preschool classroom or preschool teacher.
- **Become an early bird.** Hungry, tired kids are often clingy, cranky kids — in other words, kids primed for a preschool separation anxiety attack. So start some healthy sleep habits: Put your preschooler to bed earlier and wake her up earlier so there's time for a leisurely yet energy-boosting breakfast (like oatmeal made with milk) to help her shake off the sleepies and get her preschool mojo on. Another good reason for an early-to-bed-early-to-rise policy? You can get to preschool sooner, so your little one can settle in and get more teacher attention before the other kids arrive.
- **Get her excited about the school day.** On the way to preschool, talk about what she might do (“I bet you'll swing on the swings today”) and who she'll see. Stay upbeat, don't grill her with questions, and if you sense the conversation is stressing her out, switch to small talk. Whatever you do, don't put any ideas in her head (“Don't make a scene”) or compare her with the other kids (“Ashley never cries at preschool drop-off”).
- **Give her something to hold.** If the preschool allows it, let her bring a security object (like a favorite stuffed animal or blanket). Even if there's a ban on toys from home, give her something of yours — like a photo or scarf — that she can keep in her cubby, or just a lipstick kiss on her hand at the preschool good-bye.
- **Get her busy.** Settle her in an activity before you head out the door — or ask her to show you her most recent collage masterpiece or her favorite book. But don't give your little one the impression that you'll stay as long as she needs you. And if you're having trouble with your exit strategy, ask the teacher if she can step in while you hightail it out of there after giving your little one a breezy bye-bye.
- **Stay positive.** Don't let on that you're worried or waiting for trouble at the preschool drop-off. Instead, appear completely confident that your child will separate easily — say good-bye cheerfully and matter-of-factly. Then walk out without a backward glance (tough, but necessary).

If your child still has a hard time separating from you, try this: Say your good-byes at home and ask your partner (if your preschooler's not as attached to him!) or a classmate's parent to drop her off instead.