

Returning to school – Creating your own story

Stories are a creative way to talk about social situations or ‘tricky situations’ with children. They can help children to prepare for changes, solve problems and help them feel ready for certain experiences through story writing.

The Birmingham Educational Psychology Team have created the following resource to help parents with having conversations about the return to school following the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a blank template that you can use and adjust so that it works for your family and child when helping your child to prepare for returning to school. There are spaces for your child to complete activities that might help them feel more prepared about starting back at school. We recognise that it might be more challenging for some children and young people to feel able to return to school and have provided a separate document for parents that includes some practical suggestions and resources that can be used with children who are finding this difficult.

This story template provides that opportunity to consider some of the steps that might be involved when helping your child feel prepared about the change in routine. These include things such as considering the new morning routine, the journey to school and the wide range of feelings a child might be experiencing as a result of this disruption. There are also a range of calming techniques we have suggested which might help in supporting your child to feel calmer and soothed. We suggest that once a date has been agreed for schools to re-open, you have a conversation with the school to find out what the first week will look like in order to help prepare your child with this. Some schools might have already shared this with you.

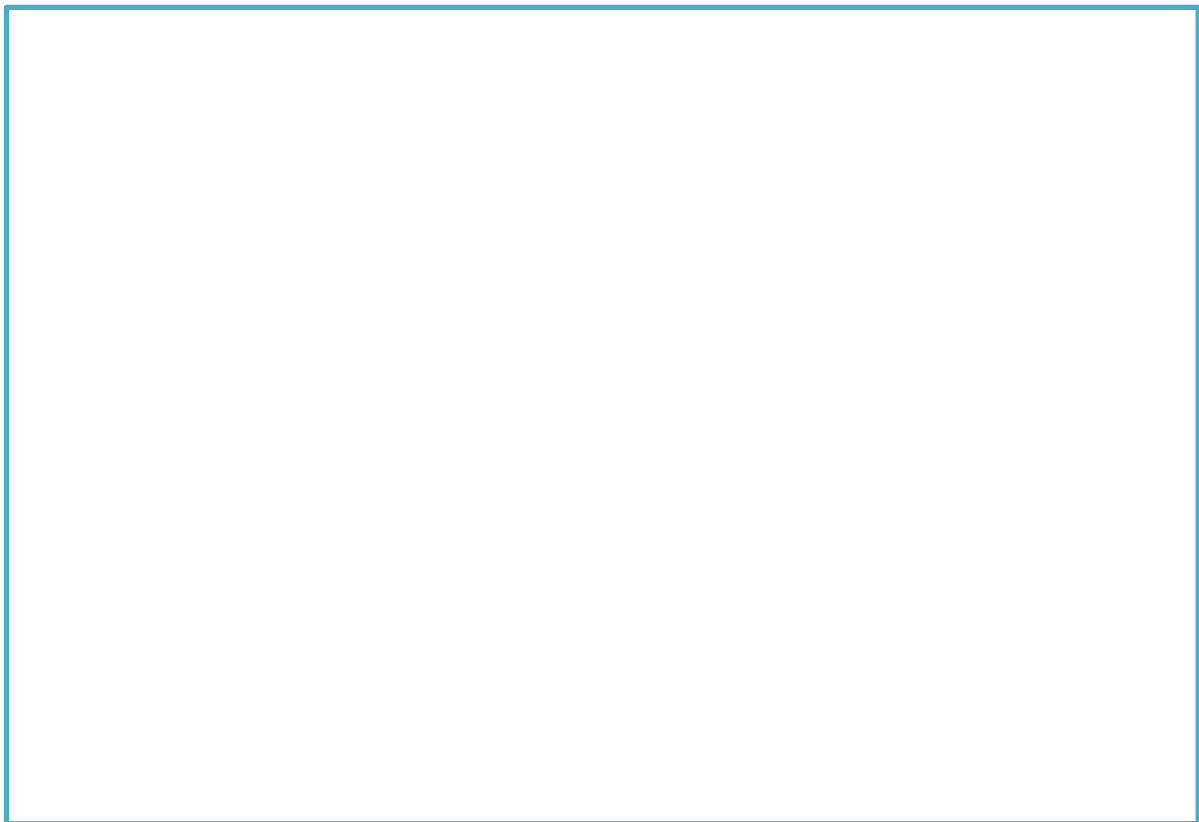
We hope this is useful for you in helping your child to feel prepared for their return to school.

_____s 'Going Back to School' story

In the middle of March 2020, all of the UK schools were asked to close, to try and keep as many children and families as safe as possible from the spread of a virus called Coronavirus.

At this time, I was in Year ___, and my class teacher was _____.
When I found out that the schools were going to close, I felt _____
because _____.
(look at the back of this booklet and you will find a bank of Feelings words).

Here draw a picture of how that made you feel (if you want to).



I am sure a lot of children at this time were feeling the same, and this is okay as it was a very strange time.

Some children were able to spend their time at home with their families, doing fun things like

My favourite thing we did in this break from school was

and I can't wait to tell my teacher and friends about what we were doing.

How did school stay in touch with your family? Have you still spoken to your friends? Below, draw a picture of what you have done whilst you have been at home, for example 'you doing school work or activities at home' or 'you talking to your friends'.



Now we have been told that schools are going to start to open again. The date I will be going back to school is _____.

This might mean a lot of change for me. For example:

1. The time I have to wake up. When I go back to school I will need to wake up at _____.
2. Getting ready for school. When I go back to school I will need to get these things ready (e.g. having a shower, eat breakfast, brushing teeth, get dressed, pack my schoolbag).

What I need to do	Time I have to do it

My journey to school

Draw a picture of your journey to school, and then you might be able to practice the journey with your family. This might be a different journey to what you are used to, or it might be the first time in a long time that you have done this journey.

1. How long does it take you to get to different points of the journey?
2. How many letterboxes do you see?
3. How many trees do you see?
4. How many roads do you have to cross?
5. It is normal to feel lots of different emotions on this journey. You might feel **excited** to see your friends, you might feel **tired** because you woke up early, you might feel **worried** about leaving the house. Write down how this journey makes you feel and talk about it. Remember that schools have opened because it is now safe to go there.



What my first week will look like

My parents will have had a conversation with somebody at school to find out what school will be like for me when I go back. These are things that might be happening on each day that I need to remember:

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	

This is what will happen for me in the morning on my very first day back.

The teacher I will meet is _____

The place I will go to is _____

Anything else?

When I go back to school, my parents will also be going back to their workplaces, or they might be waiting at home for me. One of the things I can look forward to is going back home to spend time with my family in the evening and tell them about how brave I was at school!

We hope that this helps you to feel more ready for going back to school. You have completed activities about

- All the fun things you have been doing at home
- What you will need to do in the mornings to get ready for school
- Preparing for your journey to school
- What your first week at school will be like

For some people, going back to school can be harder than it is for others. Sometimes we need time to get used to all the changes that are happening in our life. It might be helpful to practice some activities that can help us to feel calmer so that we are able to try things when we are feeling scared or worried, and think about WHO can help us.

Look at the Calming Techniques page at the end of this booklet. These are some activities that you can do to help you to feel calm.

Have a go at some of the activities and list your top 5 here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

You might want to use these 5 activities at home or at school. Think of which adults might also be able to help you to feel calm and list them here:

-
-
-

Feelings vocabulary

Brave	Shy
Cheerful	Ignored
Happy	Satisfied
Bored	Impatient
Confused	Safe
Surprised	Important
Curious	Relieved
Proud	Interested
Disappointed	Peaceful
Frustrated	Jealous
Embarrassed	Overwhelmed
Silly	Lonely
Excited	Loving
Uncomfortable	Confused
Fantastic	Tense
Worried	Angry
Friendly	Calm
Stubborn	Upset
Generous	Sad

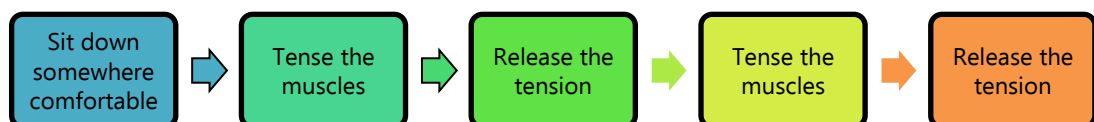
Can you think of any that we have missed? Add them to your list!

Calming techniques

- Trace a line picture from a colouring book
- Colour a pattern from the pattern book or draw a picture and colour it in
- Listen to something that you find relaxing for 5 minutes, such as your favourite song or a mindfulness video on YouTube.
- Play with fidget toys for 5 minutes
- Sort wooden blocks/buttons into colours
- Make the longest worm you can from some play dough or sticks and stones from outside
- Go and get a drink of water and drink it slowly
- Close your eyes and go to your special place in your mind for five minutes
- Take part in a yoga video. Can you stretch like a cat?
- Breathing - **BREATHE**...Slowly draw in a deep breath hold for **5 SECONDS** and then very slowly let it out for **7 SECONDS**. Continue to breathe like this until you have gained control of your body and feel calmer.
- **5, 4, 3, 2, 1 game** -
 - Describe **5** things you see in the room
 - Name **4** things you can feel
 - Name **3** things you can hear
 - Name **2** things you can smell
 - Name **1** good thing about yourself
- **Imagery** - Paint a picture of the calming place in your mind. Don't just think of the place briefly— imagine every little detail. Go through each of your senses and imagine what you would experience in your relaxing place.



- **Progressive muscle relaxation-**



Do you find any of these are helpful in making you feel calm? Which ones could be done in the classroom if you are feeling a little worried or upset? Share these with your parents and they can tell school staff about what helps you.