



FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

TIPS FROM MY BABA'S LEO BAMFORD

Starting school can be daunting for even the most outgoing four or five year old, not to mention the emotional turmoil it can inflict on the parents. With a school age son and daughter of her own, Leo Bamford - founder of the [My Baba](#) parenting blog - has experienced this twice, so we caught up with her to get some tips on how to prepare for the big day.

"I always think it's harder for the parents when your child starts big school for the first time. If they've been to nursery you'll have an idea of how you'll feel, but nothing prepares you for their first ever school uniform fitting. An alarm bell inevitably goes off - "My baby's not a baby any more!" ... Having said goodbye to two babas at the classroom door only one year apart, I would love to share a few tips and the odd bit of advice from my experience along the way."

HOW TO PREPARE THEM FOR THE BIG DAY

The main thing to remember is that every child is different. Some take to it like a duck to water, and others will cling on to you for dear life, tears streaming down their face. My main piece of advice is to 'be prepared'. The summer holidays are long, and there's plenty of time to discuss school and what to expect. There are lots of good books and my son's favourite one was '[Hugless Douglas Goes to Little School](#)'. We also did a bit of role-play around pretending to be in a classroom. If you're lucky enough to know anyone else going to the same school, try and book a play date before term starts. I find that if they have some familiar faces, they settle in easier.

If the school let you have a look around before term time, try and pop down to the canteen, and get your child to introduce themselves to the person in charge of the food - a very important person to know at school! Find out about meals and what sort of food they'll be eating, so that you can talk to them about it before, but try not to make it an issue. Many problem eaters end up eating everything on their plate at school.

CHOOSING SCHOOL UNIFORM

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When it comes to buying uniform, I try and do it a good few weeks before the start of term, and I always buy a size bigger. My daughter was drowning in her school dress when I bought it, but by the end of the summer term she was bursting at the seams. They grow so much in that first year! I'm mad about [Tiny Me](#) for iron on labels and school stickers. They even do sweet little personalised [shoe stickers](#) so that nothing gets lost. Don't forget to name everything! I try and leave haircuts and shoe buying until a week before term starts. I think it's a good idea to get your child properly measured for shoes. [Childrensalon](#) have a brilliant selection. For the first school shoe I would go for something as simple as possible for the first year, like [Children's Classics](#). Something I can't stress enough is to carefully read all the information you get sent home, armed with a fluorescent highlighter. At five years old, there's nothing worse than turning up in the wrong clothes or being taken to the wrong place at the wrong time.

WHEN THE BIG DAY ARRIVES

When you say goodbye for the first time, make it as quick as possible as it's better for everyone all round. When most children would be happily sitting at their desk signing in, I was always the mother with the clingy baba, having to pry their little fingers off me one by one. The only bit of solace I can give you is this: while you're left worrying for the day, your child will most likely settle within minutes. After leaving a blotchy hyperventilating child with my heart in my throat I've often then received an email from the teacher capturing a picture of happiness, all smiles, playing with Lego and making new friends only minutes afterwards! If your little one is anxious at leaving you for the day, I don't think it can



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The last thing I'll leave you with, is that even if you see children crying on drop-off, you never see one crying on pick-up.

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