



Tears at the School Gates

The information in this article has been adapted from:

<https://sleepingshouldbeeasy.com/child-cries-at-drop-off/>

If your child is becoming upset at the school gates in the morning and they are finding it increasingly difficult to leave your side, then the information in this article may help you.

It is focused on implementing some routines at home at different times of the day to 'big up' school and to discuss your child's day when they get home from school and address any positives and negatives then in an attempt to alleviate any stress or anxiety that your child may carry forward to the next morning.

There are 7 major points to this.

1. Discuss your child's emotions at home

Sometimes the most effective way to stop the tears start later in the day: when you get home. After pick up and when all is calm, talk to your child about their feelings that day. Use words to describe emotions, like, *"You seemed sad when I dropped you off at school this morning."*

Allow children to express feelings that they might have often so your child can become better at identifying how they are feeling using words like scared, angry, hurt and worried. Remind your child that it is ok to miss you, letting your child know that you miss them too and you look forward to seeing them at home time each day.

At the same time, discuss emotions – whether happy or difficult – places labels on feelings your child is starting to grasp. This helps them not only understand that they are normal, but to start using words to share how they feel. Most importantly, you are able to show empathy and understanding about the depth of your child's frustration.

FREE RESOURCE: As frustrating as your child's behaviour may be, a lot of it can be prevented simply by seeing things from their perspective. In this PDF, [The Power of Empathy](#), it identifies how empathy is truly the key that makes a huge difference in how we interact with our children.



2. Talk about school in a positive way

If your child is resisting school even before you leave the house, you might find yourself inadvertently talking about school in a bad way.

Don't.

This only confirms your child's fears and assumptions that school *is* a bad place that they shouldn't be. A few common ways you may be painting school in a negative light are..

- 'Yay, there's no school tomorrow'
- 'We have to get to school, no matter what'
- 'If you carry on crying you can't have (toys, treats, TV, etc.) when you get home'
- 'If you put your shoes on now, you can have an ice cream when I pick you up'

In short, avoid making school an issue to argue about. Instead, keep it positive, or at least matter of fact.

Explain that school is something we have all experienced, or highlight the fun activities they get to do there that they don't do anywhere else. For instance, reminders about the playground, books read, songs and games played.

3. Give your child a special item.

Unfortunately, due to the current restrictions in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, extra items from home must not be brought into school. We will continue to review this and when anything changes, will communicate this with you.

4. Arrive earlier than other kids

Again, unfortunately, due to the current restrictions in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, please stick to your assigned drop off and pick up times to minimise the amount

of people on the school site at any one time. We will continue to review this and when anything changes, will communicate this with you



5. Keep goodbyes pleasant and brief

What is your first reaction when your child cries at school drop off? If I had to guess, you might want to comfort them until they have calmed down and stopped crying. Except, how we say goodbye and how long for, can send the wrong message.

Comforting your child works when you are spending the whole day together, but drop offs are different – you can't be together the whole day.

Lingering until your child stops crying sends mixed signals: On one hand, you tell them that they are in safe hands, but you are also comforting them as if they are in an unpleasant situation.

Instead, convey confidence by acknowledging their emotions while reassuring children that they will be fine. No one else can comfort children quite like parents, but in this case, allow the school staff to assume that role.

Attempt to keep drop offs short as well. If your child begins to cry, remind them that they will be okay, and you will see them when you pick them up or when they get home.

6. Ask the teachers how their day went at the end of the day

It's easy to feel guilty after drop offs, especially when the last thing you saw was your child in tears.

But that last scene can be misleading. Truth is, your child probably did not cry for the whole day. In fact, they probably stopped crying a few minutes after you left.

At pick up time, a quick question to the class teacher asking 'How was XXXX day?' to reassure you that they did not spend their day in tears and enjoyed the rest of their day.



7. This will pass!

As parents, you are your children's world. A healthy attachment to parents is usually the reason your child cries at school drop off. Don't feel like you didn't do a good job because your child cried while others didn't, revel in the strong parent-child connection you've built.

It will get better. Both parent and child will find rhythm to your morning. Your child will learn to love and trust the staff in school and you will feel more confident about letting your child go into school.

In time, you and your child will both adjust to the new normal of school life. If you need any more information or feel your child would benefit from visual routine cards that can be used for morning, and indeed, evening routine please get in touch with the school office and ask for Mr. Canning to get in touch with you.