A child starting school faces an enormous task of adjustment to many unfamiliar situations and experiences. Parents can help by ensuring that their child is prepared for increasing independence and able to manage basic living skills. The Gold Coast District Health Services Community Child Health offers this advice for parents of children about to start school.

Your Child should be able to:

1. **Give own name**, address and telephone number.
2. **Recognise own name** and be responsible for own belongings eg. school bag, lunch box, drink bottle. Colour coding may be helpful; allow your child to choose his own personal colour.
3. **Take off own shoes and socks** and put them on again; also tie own shoe laces. Shoes with Velcro fastening or sandals are ideal for children who need a little help.
4. **Attend to own toilet needs**, including removing clothes, wiping self, flushing toilet, washing and drying hands.
5. **Blow nose properly**. This is best practised at home. To encourage correct nose blowing, show your child how to take a deep breath through the mouth, then close the mouth and hold tissue over nose, blow through both nostrils and wipe. Remind your child to wash hands after disposing of tissues.
6. **Accept wearing a hat**. Teach your child never to share hats or hair brushes and combs because of the risk of transference of head lice.
7. **Apply own sunscreen**. Let your child practise at home.
8. **Eat Breakfast**. The importance of eating breakfast before school cannot be overstated. If breakfast is missed, there is a risk of headaches, tiring and lack of concentration in the class and learning unhealthy habit missing meals.
9. **Eat Lunch**. Lunch box and drink container need to be of a variety that can be easily opened. To help keep lunch cool, freeze drink overnight and place in lunch box. Avoid difficult plastic wrappers: little fingers have trouble unwrapping them. During the holidays, try having picnic lunches with what your child will be taking to school, thus he will become familiar with how to eat from a lunch box. You might find your child’s appetite waning in the first few weeks of school because of the excitement and anxiety of new experiences, so keep food in small, nourishing amounts.
10. **Accepting a routine bed time at a reasonable hour**. School is exciting, but also tiring. For the first few weeks, frustration and tiredness can be a concern. Set aside time to share the day and your child’s experiences. Listen and give encouragement. Make a point of getting to know your child’s teacher and how the school system works.
11. **Be aware of vital safety measures**. Teach your child to cross roads at pedestrian crossings and to follow the instructions of “lollipop” ladies. When going to school by car, teach your child to always get out of the car on the pavement side. Ensure your child knows never to accept presents or rides from strangers, even if the person appears to know them. Your child needs to know *when* and *where* they will be picked up after school and by *whom*. Always *be on time*. Children are at far more risk of accidents then illness.

If your child has trouble starting school, talk to the teacher.