

Top 10 Back to School Tips for Students with Brain Injury

The summer is on its way out and the back to school bandit is knocking on your door, calling you to each and every retail store to buy all of your back to school needs. While marketing agencies have come up with the catchiest slogans and cartoon characters to advertise on backpacks and lunchboxes, there are some very practical things that you can look for as you shop that may help your child throughout the year. So as you venture out to do your back to school shopping, here are some practical items to add to your shopping and to-do list.

1. A copy of the student's locker number & combination, and a locker organizer:

A copy of your child's locker number and combination may be very helpful to your child. Have your child tape a copy of this information in his or her organizer and in their backpack, and be sure to keep an extra copy at home. If your child also has a gym locker, do the same for the gym locker. Also, most office supply stores and drug stores sell locker organizers that allow a student to organize their books and materials.

2. A copy of the student's schedule, school map and a visit to the school:

For schedules, be sure to label class, teacher's name, room number and even floor number. Some schools can even provide you with a map/layout of the school which can help your child better manage switching classes. It is also helpful to have your child visit the school before school starts to become familiar with the layout of the school and where his/her classes and locker are located.

3. An "organized backpack":

A backpack with various compartments may help your child keep organized. While a regular backpack without compartments may look nice, it doesn't provide your child with the structure or compartments to keep his or her things organized.

4. An "organizable" notebook:

A multi-subject notebook may be easier for your child to keep organized than having multiple notebooks. If your child has organizational difficulties and loses things easily, it may be easier for your child to remember to bring one notebook to school as opposed to several. Also choosing a notebook with tabs that can be used to label each subject can help your child stay organized. If the notebook does not come with tabs, you can purchase them and add them separately.

5. Academic journal/organizer:

An academic journal or organizer will help your child write down the assignments that are due as well as future assignment dates or test dates. This book is highly recommended if your child has memory problems. This assignment book will essentially work as a memory book by helping your child to remember assignments, due dates and upcoming events.

6. Wall calendar:

A wall calendar for your child's room can also help your child to remember important dates and events. This can also reinforce deadlines and help with future scheduling.

7. An audio recorder:

Depending on your child's age, with permission your child's teacher may allow an audio recorder in the classroom if your child has trouble focusing and/or recalling information. An audio recorder would probably be more suitable for an upper classman in high school and is very commonly used in college. This can also be used as a study tool for your child to replay as necessary to recall any information he or she may have missed in actual lectures.

8. Post-it notes and colored flags:

Post-it notes are great because they allow your child to write down things he or she needs to do and remove them once tasks have been completed. They can be used to list particular tasks that need to be completed if your child is having organizational troubles and can also be used if your child is having trouble breaking down steps of tasks. Post-it flags come in various colors and sizes, and can be used to tag certain areas of books, notebooks, papers, etc. for quicker access to finding the information a student needs.

9. Strategy Note cards:

If your child has received any rehabilitation and has been given compensatory strategies to help with deficits, writing them on note cards for him or her to refer to may be very helpful. The key to success when utilizing strategy note cards is to color code them and keeping them organized. For example, keeping them together in a box at home and in a pocket of the student's backpack can help.

10. Highlighters & pencils:

Pencils or erasable pens are great because your child can erase his or her mistakes and can also help them to keep their work neat and tidy, in turn helping them with his or her organizational skills. Highlighters can also be very helpful in helping your child remember relevant information.

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