

CONSUMER IMPACT

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MESSAGE FROM

The Minister

The Back-to-School shopping season is a significant period for consumers. Parents are faced with making numerous purchasing decisions and can be influenced by the preferences of young consumers who desire to have the latest gadgets or trendy apparel.



This edition of the Consumer Impact focuses on preparing our students for back-to-school. It includes various articles from which parents can gain useful insights to make informed purchasing decisions. It also shares important safety tips to ensure our boys and girls are safe as they return to the classroom.

As consumers patronize the various businesses, the Prices and Consumer Affairs Division will continue to monitor activities within the marketplace to protect consumers from unfair practices. Officers within the division will ensure goods named under the Distribution and Price of Goods Act (CAP 138), do not exceed their maximum selling price, keeping items such as fruits, nuts, snacks, unsweetened cereals and fruit juices affordable and accessible to the public.

Shortly, the new Consumer Protection Act 2025 will be enforced, providing consumers with even greater protection. Under this Act, the consumer is entitled to certain rights, including to be informed of certain details of the goods, such as care, origin, proper use, and installation, to pay the lowest of the prices that are displayed in cases of dual prices, and to be given a receipt for transactions over \$10. Additionally, the Act makes provision for providers to be penalized for unfair trade practices, false, misleading or deceptive representations, unfair or unjust transactions and bait advertising.

In the new school year, the division aims to partner with even more learning institutions. This initiative is part of our ongoing efforts to educate our nation's youth. In September, the Division will continue its Big C Club in primary schools. The program, now in its seventh year, is designed to raise consumer awareness among grade five students. Additionally, the division will host various public education initiatives to inform the public of the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act 2025.

I commend the division for its routine engagement with our students and the public on various aspects of consumer protection. I applaud the staff for their efforts.

As our students return to school, we pray they will be safe. May they have a productive and rewarding year.

E. P. Chet Greene

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Barbuda Affairs

BACK TO SCHOOL: READY AND SAFE

By Royal Police Force of
Antigua and Barbuda

As schools across Antigua and Barbuda prepare to reopen for the new academic year, the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda (RPFAB) extends its best wishes to students, parents, teachers, and school administrators. This season marks a time of renewed focus, new opportunities for growth, and a shared responsibility to ensure our children return to school Ready and Safe.

As the principal law enforcement agency of the twin-island state, the RPFAB remains committed to its core mission: preserving law and order, protecting life and property, and working hand in hand with the community to prevent crime and promote public safety. Central to this mission is our steadfast dedication to the well-being of our youth, the future leaders of our nation. Keeping in line with our commitment to community-based policing, the RPFAB continues to strengthen partnerships with schools and youth-focused organizations. Our officers routinely engage students through school visits, mentorship programmes, and crime prevention education. These initiatives highlight our unwavering efforts to foster a secure and supportive learning environment for all.

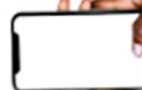
A Shared Responsibility

Safety is a collective responsibility. Whether you are a student, parent, teacher, or community member, we all play a vital role in building a culture of awareness, vigilance, and mutual respect. The start of a new school year provides an ideal opportunity to reinforce positive habits and responsible behavior, both inside and outside the classroom.

Safety Tips for Students

- To help students stay safe and confident during the school term, we encourage the following practical safety tips:
- Stay alert and always be aware of your surroundings.

- Avoid distractions such as texting or loud music while walking.
- Walk in groups and avoid dark or isolated areas.
- Let a trusted adult know your whereabouts and daily routine.
- Report any suspicious activity, bullying, or threats immediately.
- Never accept rides from strangers or overshare personal information online.
- Safeguard your belongings and avoid exposing large sums of money in public.
- Practice road safety, use pedestrian crossings and obey traffic rules.
- Do not leave food or drinks unattended at social gatherings.
- Say no to drugs and alcohol and avoid environments that encourage risky behaviour.
- Always show respect for teachers, classmates, and authority figures.



Working Together for a Safer School Year

In the face of ongoing societal challenges, the RPFAB remains focused on serving with professionalism, compassion, and integrity. We continue to collaborate closely with the Ministry of Education, youth development agencies, and other partners to address issues such as youth violence, peer conflict, and behavioural risk.

We urge parents, guardians, and community leaders to support these collective efforts. Together, we can empower our young people to make positive choices, embrace discipline, and grow into responsible, law-abiding citizens.

As we welcome the start of another academic year, let us place safety at the heart of our success. The Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda wishes every student a productive, enriching, and secure school year ahead.

Happy Learning! Stay Ready. Stay Safe.

Mr. N. Frankie Thomas
Assistant Superintendent of police
Public Relations Officer - RPFAB

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Under the Sale of Goods Act 1990 (393), consumers are entitled to expect any goods from a trader:

- 1. Are of merchantable quality:**
This means, they must be reasonably fit for normal purpose, considering the price and how it was described. A new item must not be broken or damaged. It must work properly. For example, the buttons on your new calculator should function properly when pressed.
- 2. Must be fit for the particular purpose:**
If the consumer requests a pencil for shading and tonal modelling, the texture and marks of the pencil should be ideal for that function.
- 3. Must be as described:**
On the package, a display sign or by the seller. For example, a pair of shoes in a box should not be brown if on the box is marked black.



Safety On The Road And At The Bus Stop



After a long summer, parents love to have children prepared to take on a new term, school or semester. After the excitement has subsided and the necessary school uniform and supplies have been procured, safety becomes a number one priority.

Safety, not only at school but at the bus stops and on the road. Safety is a critically important factor for children, based on their vulnerability. Persons should exercise extreme care for children as passengers, pedestrians and cyclists on the road. Road safety should be transferred to our children not only by parents but educators and the community.

Children who incorporate road safety as a part of their daily lives become confident and responsible and are able to navigate the world more safely.

Safety on the road

Children are more susceptible to accidents and injuries on the road due to their tendency to be easily distracted.



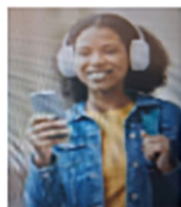
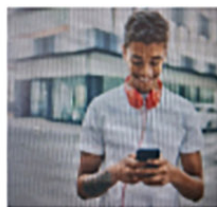
Road safety can be promoted by doing the following:

- Supervise young children: Children under 12 should not cross roads alone.
- Teach safe crossing: Practice crossing roads with children, explaining the importance of looking both ways and waiting for traffic to stop. Look left, right, and then left again before crossing.

Children should be encouraged to use crosswalks. Always cross streets at designated crosswalks or intersections. This is important as there are adults who fail to obey road signs and symbols and may not stop at the crosswalk or intersection.



- Hold hands: For very small children, reinforce the habit of holding hands when near traffic.
- Be a role model: As adults, set a good example by following road rules and demonstrating safe behaviors.
- Increase visibility: Ensure children wear bright clothing, especially in low-light conditions, and consider reflective accessories.
- Minimize distractions: Remind children to put away phones and headphones when near the roads or crossing the streets.



Distracting activities such as eating, playing or intense conversation while crossing street, should also be avoided.

- Walk on Sidewalks: If there are no sidewalks, walk facing the oncoming traffic.
- Make it interactive: Teach road safety through games, discussions, and real-life scenarios.

Safety at the Bus stops

Children should adhere to all precautions previously mentioned to maintain safety on the road. However, it is equally important for children to remain vigilant at bus stops.

- While waiting for the bus, students should stand in a safe location, at least six feet (3 giant steps) away from the curb or edge of the road. This safe zone helps prevent accidents if the bus suddenly moves or if other vehicles pass by too closely.
- Visibility: Avoid standing behind poles, trees or vehicles where the driver cannot see you.
- Remain calm: Pushing and shoving is a no-no at the bus stop. There should also be no playing near the bus stop.



- Do not cross behind buses. Crossing behind the bus prevents the driver from seeing you and can cause an accident to occur.
- Look left and right: Even when the driver signals it's safe, always double-check for oncoming traffic by looking left and right before stepping into the street.

Enjoy the 2025-26 academic year and be safe.

Compiled @Product development unit 2025
Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board

HOW TO CHOOSE A SCHOOL BAG?

● Right size and weight

Look for a backpack that's the right size and weight for your child. It should fit snugly but comfortably, and it shouldn't weigh more than 10-15% of their body weight.

● Padded shoulder straps and back panel

Choose a backpack with padded shoulder straps and a padded back panel. This will help distribute the weight evenly and prevent discomfort.

● Multiple compartments and pockets

Make sure the backpack has multiple compartments and pockets. This will help keep your child's belongings organized and easy to find.

● Durable materials and sturdy zippers

Choose a backpack that's made of durable materials and has sturdy zippers. This will ensure that it can withstand the wear and tear of everyday use.

● Consider your child's style

Let your child choose a backpack that they like. This will help them feel more excited about going to school. (4fstore.com)





Tips on saving around the year for back-to-school

by Lottola Auguste, Operations Manager,
St. John's Co-operative Credit Union

Back to school can be an exciting time for families, especially when children start a new school or a new school year. However, it often comes with financial pressure. The thought of purchasing school supplies and uniforms, and facilitating payments for technological equipment like computers and laptops and extracurricular costs such as sports, music, dance and after class programs, the expenses add up quickly. Every parent or guardian wants the best for their child or children. The key to managing these costs without stress lies in the planning, budgeting and savings tips that are utilized during the year.

The earlier one starts setting money aside, the better prepared one will be when back-to-school arrives.

Consider opening a dedicated savings account solely for school-related expenses. Even small monthly contributions can build a strong financial cushion

over the year. The best way to stay ahead of back-to-school costs is to treat them like any other large annual expense, such as insurance payments, holiday shopping or vacation planning.



The tips below can help families prepare for back-to-school expenses while staying financially secure throughout the year.

Start Saving Early and Consistently

One of the easiest ways to save is to set up an automatic weekly or monthly transfer into a back-to-school savings account to facilitate regular contributions throughout the year. Setting aside a little savings can make a difference by the time August rolls around. You may be surprised by how much money was saved.

Create a Year-Round Budget for School Expenses

Many families underestimate how much they will spend on school supplies, uniforms, clothes, and technology throughout the year. Creating a budget that includes school-related expenses not just in August, but all year round, will help to manage spending and avoid surprises. Be realistic about your budget and ensure that it covers all the critical expenses that must be covered. Track costs from the previous school year, including unexpected items like sports equipment or school trips. This way, you will have a realistic idea of what to expect.



Teach Children About Budgeting and Saving

Back-to-school season is also a wonderful opportunity to involve your children in budgeting and financial literacy. Let them help create a shopping list, compare prices, and make smart choices about what they really need. Stock up on essentials like notebooks, pens, and folders when prices are low. It will be a learning opportunity that pays dividends for years to come. Savings Accounts, tailored for young savers, are a great way to teach children how to save money.

Consider a Back-to-School Loan for Larger Purchases

If you require assistance with larger expenses like laptops, sports fees, or school uniforms for multiple children, a loan may be a smart option. Rather than dipping into your savings, a personal loan can assist with back-to-school expenses and keep your budget intact.

Remember, back-to-school does not have to cause you financial worries once handled correctly. With proper planning, the right savings tools, and support from your financial institution, you can ensure that your children are fully prepared for school while keeping your finances on track.

Start saving today and make next year's back-to-school smoother and more manageable.



Keep receipts

A receipt is proof that a consumer has purchased a good or service. A receipt given to a customer should include:

- the business name and address
- the date
- details of the good or service
- the price

Consumers should keep receipts or other relevant documents for goods or services in case a problem arises. Having such documents can make it easier for consumers to obtain redress.



Tip: Photos of receipts may be used as proof of purchase. Consumers can take photos of receipts and save them on their phone in case they need them later.



Some Tips to Consider When Bringing in Items for Back-to-School

By Antigua & Barbuda Customs & Excise Division

As families gear up for the new school year, many are turning to overseas retailers and online platforms to source school supplies, uniforms, electronic devices, and educational tools. Whether through online orders, barrel shipments, courier services, or after a trip abroad, bringing in back-to-school items requires smart, safe, and informed choices.

Here are 10 essential customs and consumer tips to guide parents, guardians, and community members as they shop for the school year ahead:

1 Know What's Permitted

Before buying or shipping anything, be sure it's allowed entry into Antigua and Barbuda. Items such as toy weapons or counterfeit branded goods may be restricted or prohibited. When in doubt, consult the customs website. www.customs.gov.ag for prohibited and restricted goods.



2 Understand Your Allowances

If you're travelling and bringing back items, it's important to know the personal allowance limits. The duty-free allowance for personal-use items is USD \$200 (XCD \$540). Additionally, laptops and tablets are eligible for waivers on Import Duty, ABST, and 50% of the Revenue Recovery Charge (RRC)—a welcome cash relief for all students.



3 Declare All Items Honestly

Whether you're bringing in books, electronics, or school shoes, always declare all items truthfully. Undeclared or misrepresented goods can result in fines, penalties, delays, or confiscation.

4 Save Your Receipts

Keep your receipts or invoices! Customs uses the transaction value (including shipping and insurance) to assess duties and taxes. No receipt? You could face delays or estimated valuations.



5 Consider Safety Standards

When importing electronics like tablets or laptops, ensure they meet international voltage and safety standards. Non-compliant devices can pose electrical or fire hazards, especially in school settings.



6 Budget for Duties and Taxes

Even with cost-saving in mind, remember that Customs duties and taxes may apply to many imported items. Being aware helps you avoid surprises at the Port.



7 Use Reputable Couriers and Brokers

Use only reputable courier services or customs brokers. They're trained to process your paperwork correctly and help expedite the clearance process.

8 Avoid Counterfeit and Substandard Items

That deal might look sweet, but counterfeit or low-quality goods often don't last and may even be harmful. Invest in trusted brands—especially for items children will use every day.

9 Track and Ship Early

Order early to beat the back-to-school rush. Waiting too late can mean clearance delays, and extra costs. Planning ahead saves time, money and less headaches.



10 Stay Informed

Follow the Customs & Excise Division and the Department of Consumer Affairs on our official platforms. Get updates on regulations, seasonal advisories, and helpful shopping tips throughout the year.

<https://www.facebook.com/CustomsAntiguaBarbuda>

<https://www.facebook.com/pcadab>

<https://consumeraffairs.gov.ag>

Final Word

The back-to-school season is a time for new beginnings and endless possibilities. By staying informed, declaring items correctly, and planning ahead, you can ensure a safe and hassle-free experience as your child gears up for success.

For questions or guidance on importing school items, feel free to contact the Customs & Excise Division at:

☎ 268-468-6100

Website: www.customs.gov.ag

Email: customs@ab.gov.ag or customsresearch@ab.gov.ag

SHOP AROUND BEFORE MAKING PURCHASES

Consumers should shop around and compare prices, value for money, options, and their needs before making purchases. This allows them to make more informed purchasing decisions and choose the most affordable option without compromising quality.

Remember, consumers are not entitled to redress simply because they change their minds, found the item at a cheaper price, or their child doesn't like the style.



Photo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcITzn5Crjk>

What To Look For In A School Shoe

Fit

Your child's feet can grow up to two sizes in six months, so you need to account for growth when buying shoes. That does not mean you should buy shoes that are too big—oversized shoes cause the foot to slide forward, putting excessive pressure on the toes. A good fit is about a finger's width from the end of the shoe to the tip of the big toe.

Tight shoes can cause blisters, corns and calluses on your child's toes, blisters on the back of the heels or worse, ingrown nails, which can become infected.

Support

Inspect new shoes for proper cushioning and arch support. When buying shoes, check to see that the toe box flexes easily, and the shoe does not bend in the middle of the sole.

Durability

Whether they're running around the schoolyard or having a kickabout on the field, your child's school shoes need to be tough enough to withstand all sorts of activities. Choosing a good quality pair will help ensure they last longer.

Style

Many schools have specific shoe guidelines. Ensure you purchase a pair that aligns with the school's policy.

It's important that younger children can take their shoes on and off easily by themselves, so Velcro is a favourite option for primary school shoes. Older children will start to get more style-conscious, so consider involving them in the shoe shopping experience. (foothealthfacts.org; clarks.com)



Creating a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment in the Grade 6 Classroom

By Sheryl Persaud

One of the major milestones in an elementary student's academic journey is the transition into Grade 6. It marks the end of their primary school experience, and it comes with great social and emotional changes and development, not to mention the demanding academic expectations! During this final year of elementary school, students are preparing to write the National Assessment, graduate and plan for High School. Students are usually under immense stress and pressure from the high expectations placed on them by their school, parents, teachers and even peers! For many, it is their goal to pass in the 'Top 100' or at least score high enough to achieve entry into their High School of choice. Students spend tireless hours studying and practicing past exam papers with the hope of making this a reality.

For students to thrive during this stressful time, it is essential that teachers provide a safe and supportive learning environment - one that nurtures both their minds and their sense of self.

For students to be successful, a teacher needs to create a classroom that fosters emotional and physical safety. At this level, students are forming deeper social bonds, and they are becoming more self-aware. This causes them to be more vulnerable to peer pressure, bullying, and anxiety. Teachers can help students through these challenges by creating a classroom atmosphere that emphasizes respect, kindness, and responsibility. To build this type of classroom, clear and consistent routines need to be taught, modeled and reinforced so that students know what is expected of them at all times. When these expectations are modeled and reinforced regularly, students feel more secure expressing themselves and taking academic risks. Creating



safe spaces for discussion - where no answer is ridiculed and every opinion is valued - helps foster a classroom culture of mutual respect.

Additionally, teachers should remain vigilant about potential signs of bullying or exclusion and respond quickly and appropriately. Teachers can create tools or 'safe' spaces that allow students to speak freely. Regular check-ins, anonymous feedback boxes, or classroom circles can be useful tools that allow all students to feel included and heard.

Sixth grade often introduces more challenging material, new subjects, and different teachers. This change can be intimidating. A supportive learning environment meets each student's learning needs and helps them to grow with clear guidance and constant encouragement.

Differentiation instruction is key. With differentiation, teachers provide various ways for each student to access content, demonstrate understanding, and engage in their learning. Group projects, individual



Photo: <https://chicagocrusader.com/genius-black-teens-solve-math-problem-believed-to-be-impossible-for-1000-years/>

assignments, hands-on activities, or digital tools allows students to explore and discover what works best for them. Also, giving the student an opportunity to choose and to have a voice in their learning process increases engagement and ownership. Teachers can involve students in setting classroom goals, choosing project topics, or creating parts of the class schedule. When students feel their opinions matter, they are more likely to take responsibility for their actions and learning.

Positive reinforcement plays a huge role in building confidence. Recognizing effort, celebrating progress, and offering constructive feedback rather than harsh criticism helps students stay motivated and resilient. In sixth grade, where self-esteem can be fragile, encouragement from a trusted teacher can make a lasting impact and can boost student performance.



Photo: <https://www.mindfulmoments.com/school-culture-affects-black-student-achievement>

Encouraging informed decision-making also helps students to build independence. Teaching them how to evaluate options, weigh consequences, and seek help when needed lays the foundation for critical thinking and responsible behaviour inside and outside the classroom.

Ultimately, a safe and supportive environment is about creating a sense of belonging. Team-building activities, peer collaboration, and class discussions all help build relationships and promote empathy. When students trust each other and their teacher, they're more willing to participate, take risks, and help one another succeed.

By focusing on safety, support and connection, educators can guide sixth graders through a pivotal year with confidence and care - setting them up not just for academic success, but for personal growth as well.

SMART rules when using the internet



S

SAFE

Keep safe by being careful not to give out personal information – such as your full name, email address, phone number, home address, photos or school name – to people you are chatting with online.

M

MEETING

Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Only do so with your parents' or caregivers' permission, and even then, only when they are present.

A

ACCEPTING

Accepting emails, IM messages, or opening files, pictures or texts from people you don't know or trust can lead to problems – they may contain viruses or nasty messages!

R

RELIABLE

Information you find on the internet may not be true, or someone online may be lying about who they are.

T

TELL

Tell your parents, caregiver or a trusted adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online. You can report online abuse to the police at 462-0125.

**THINK
U
KNOW**





Supporting Students' mental health and well-being

Photo: <https://www.news24.com/citypress/voices/blade-nzmande-mental-health-education-is-key-for-success-of-sas-skills-economy-20221027>

by Alicia Gordon-Thomas
MSc, M-RAS, CFLE
Counsellor, Registered Addiction Specialist,
Family Life Educator

Your child's mental health plays a major role in how they learn, grow, and thrive. Therefore, prioritizing mental well-being is significant as students transition back to school.

Over the last few years, mental health awareness has shifted in a positive direction. There has been more focus on self-care rather than pathology. In my profession, "Miss, I need to talk to you", or "when can I see you"? have become common conversations. The students would check my door for availability or message to say, "When can I come to talk"? This growing interest and awareness observed even outside the school domain indicate that mental well-being is important to the students.

When the summer break is over, it's back to school again. At times, in the shadows of the September morning excitement lies unspoken uncertainty, stress, sadness, the big transition from primary to secondary, or just the general anxiety and fear of living in Antigua as we know it today. Parents and trusted family members can help their children navigate their feelings and emotions as they go back to school. Here are a few ways parents can support scholars as they return to school.

Is there anything I can look out for as my child goes back to school?

In addition to checking on your child's learning as they settle in the new school year, you must look

out for signs of anxiety, stress, bullying, among other issues. You can start by having an open conversation about his or her feelings and concerns. It is important to normalize feelings of anxiety or any other feeling while assuring to make your child feel at ease.



Photo: <https://www.childrens.com/health-wellness/rise-of-mental-health-issues-in-children>

1 Check in with your child regularly

When checking in, you can ask questions like:

How do you feel about returning to school or going to a new school?

When they start school, you can ask, What is going well and what is not going well at school?

Is there anyone teasing or bullying you?

Are there any issues you want me to address at school? In addition, as parents, you can use cues to ask the appropriate questions to support your child.

2 Monitor Safety

Safety has become a growing concern among us, and parents play a vital role in ensuring the safety of the children entrusted to them.

Be sure to share safety tips with your child.

Know who your children's friends and their parents are.

Additionally, a device coupled with the internet can be a dangerous neighbourhood; therefore, safe and monitored use of devices and social media platforms is necessary to avoid your child becoming a target. Always encourage your child to take advantage of digital tools that enhance their learning.



Photo: <https://www.pittsburghparent.com/importance-of-mental-health-in-your-family/>

3 Addressing stress and anxiety

If your child is anxious or worried about safety, the school environment, bullying, or as simple as forming friendships, you must: Listen to your children's concerns, speak positively, and reassure them.

Stay calm, help your child identify what they are feeling.

Focus on positive experiences and engage your child in relaxation activities regularly.

If you need additional support, please reach out to the school counselor or other agencies that can provide help if your child is experiencing prolonged stress, anxiety, or trauma. Also, inform teachers of your child's challenges so they can partner in providing support.

Wishing you all the best for a mentally healthy back-to-school season!

MISLEADING SIGNS

The zipper on my new school bag stops working before the first day of school, but the sign in the store says, "NO REFUND. NO EXCHANGE." What should I do?

- A Go to the store and seek redress.
- B Do nothing.
- C Curse the workers at the store.
- D Pay for the repair myself.



The correct answer is A.

**ALL SALES
FINAL
NO RETURN
OR EXCHANGE**

**NO Refund
or Exchange
on SALE
Merchandise**

"No refund", "No exchange", or "All sales are final" signs are generally displayed by businesses to inform consumers of the store's policy. In keeping with Section 16 of the Sale of Goods Act (393), traders cannot withhold the consumer's right to redress once the good has a defect. This applies even if the good is on sale. However, once the defect was pointed out to the consumer before the sale transaction, the consumer is not entitled to redress.

The consumer should return the school bag to the store and seek redress, which can include an exchange, repair or refund. Should the consumer fail to resolve the matter with the store amicably, the consumer can make a complaint to the division.

How clear vision supports classroom confidence

by Jamella Jack
Optometrist Bsc (Hons)
Paradise Vision Center



Photo: <https://c-hit.org/2020/01/22/nearly-40-of-young-children-missing-out-on-vision-screenings/>

From birth, a child's vision starts to develop. When a baby is born, his vision is blurry. He mostly sees a blob of images, not really seeing colours much either. As the weeks and months pass, the images become a little more vivid. He may see shapes and colours. He starts to follow you with his eyes. You might find a baby staring at the light fixture, or the ceiling and is attracted especially to bright colours. He starts to recognize faces and identify who is who in the family. All these are signs of vision development in the early stages of life.

As the baby continues to grow, his vision improves. The baby develops hand-eye coordination. These are all normal developmental milestones. As a parent or caretaker, these are some of the things to look out for. When a child starts pre-school, they mostly use large letters, colours and sensory toys. At this stage, it may seem like all is well with your child's vision.

Once the child starts primary school, this is sometimes when a parent or teacher notices vision problems. In



the classroom, there are some signs that a teacher may or may not notice. The child may be seated at the back of the classroom and would walk to the front of the classroom to see

the board. The child may copy from their classmates' books because they are unable to see the board clearly. During reading, the child may skip lines, and confuse letters and words. Squinting to see the distance or to read is another indication that there could be vision problems.

These vision problems can result in the overall behaviour and academic performance of the child. The child may become easily distracted or lack interest in the class. Academically, the child may struggle in areas like reading, comprehension and subject areas that require reading.

On the other hand, a child who sees well will most likely participate in class more, learn to read at their grade level, and their overall performance at school will be good. They may appear more well-rounded socially and academically.

Due to the importance of early childhood development, we normally recommend an eye exam once the child is ready to start primary school or sooner if the parent or family member notices any issues with the child's vision.

There are instances where an organization would do eye screenings in schools or health fairs. There have been, in my experience, a lot of children who are screened at these fairs, etc., and found to have failed the visual acuity test. We would recommend a full eye exam as a



"...a full eye exam is recommended at least when the child starts primary school and every year thereafter or as recommended by their eye doctor."

screening is only to identify any vision problems. Unfortunately, the majority of the children do not get to do the full exam. In some instances, the full exam is not done because the parent doesn't take it seriously, or they are not able to afford it. Therefore, the child continues to be affected at school as they get older.

If a child is recommended or starts wearing glasses, it is our duty (eye doctor, parents and teachers) to ensure that he/she is comfortable and happy to wear the glasses. We should discourage other classmates from teasing children who wear glasses because that would affect their confidence in wearing them. They may complain about not seeing well in the glasses and stop wearing them just so they are not teased at school.

In conclusion, a full eye exam is recommended at least when the child starts primary school



"We should discourage other classmates from teasing children who wear glasses because that would affect their confidence in wearing them."

and every year thereafter or as recommended by their eye doctor. The benefits would be early detection and early treatment of visual problems, which would give them a chance to excel in the classroom.

Is my child a consumer?

A consumer can be defined as a person who purchases goods and services for personal use or a person who uses goods and services. This includes our boys and girls.

Typically, children begin making an input in purchasing decisions at an early age. They share their likes and dislikes in food, the colour or style of clothing they prefer, or the movie they would like to watch. As children grow older, parents and guardians must decide the level of responsibility they are given. For example, a



10-year-old may not be as mature as a 15-year-old might be to purchase school uniforms. Adults must be mindful that children are developing and may lack life experiences and other abilities necessary to make informed purchasing decisions.



Photo: <https://successfulblackparenting.com/2024/09/02/best-schools-for-black-students/>

Preventing Dental Emergencies at School: Empowering Parents and Students for a Safe and Healthy Back-to-School Season

As the new school year begins, parents focus on packing backpacks and buying supplies. Yet, one crucial aspect often overlooked is dental safety. Accidents like a football kick during recess or a fall in the playground, can cause dental emergencies. Knowing how to prevent and respond to these situations is essential for preserving your child's smile.

The Importance of Healthy Teeth and a Good Smile

Most children aged 6 to 7 have permanent front teeth that will last a lifetime, supporting biting, smiling, and speaking. Protecting these teeth is vital. For younger children, damage to primary (baby) teeth is less likely to cause long-term issues but still warrants prompt dental care. Early assessment helps ensure proper development and can facilitate orthodontic planning, like braces, if needed.

Prevention Through Good Oral Hygiene

Prevention begins with good oral health habits: brushing twice daily with fluoride toothpaste, flossing regularly, and visiting the dentist at least twice a year. Regular checkups catch small problems early, preventing emergencies. Think of dental visits as routine tune-ups for your child's smile, keeping teeth and gums healthy.

**Dr. S. SenGupta BDS FDS RCPS (Glass.) Dip Ortho
Dental Surgeon**

Preventive Measures at School

While accidents are inevitable, steps can be taken to minimize risks:

Use Mouthguards:
Encourage children to wear properly fitted mouthguards during sports or physical activities. Though they may look funny, they significantly reduce injury risk.



Safe Play Areas:
Ensure playgrounds and sports fields are well-maintained and free of hazards.



Education: Teach children safe play habits and discourage using teeth as tools – for example, biting into non-food items or opening packages with teeth.

Responding to Dental Injuries: Immediate Actions

Despite precautions, accidents happen. Quick and correct responses are crucial:

Stay Calm: Keep calm to help your child stay calm too. Check for pain, bleeding, or visible broken or knocked-out teeth.

Control Bleeding: Rinse the mouth with water and apply a cold compress outside the mouth to reduce swelling.

Find and Handle the Tooth Carefully: If a tooth is knocked out, locate it by the crown (the part visible in the mouth).

Do not scrub or remove tissue fragments. Rinse gently with water and keep moist—either in the socket, milk, saliva, or a special preservation solution.

Seek Immediate Dental Care: Act within 30 minutes to an hour. Contact your dentist or go to the nearest emergency dental clinic.



Handling Damaged Teeth

If your child chips or cracks a tooth, rinse with water, apply a cold compress, and save any broken pieces. Prompt dental evaluation is essential for proper treatment.



Photo: <https://plazadentalcenter.com/pediatric-dentist/st-john-mo/>

The Importance of Fast Action Time Is critical.

The longer a knocked-out tooth remains out of the socket, the lower the chance of successful replantation. Early intervention can save the tooth, maintain function, and prevent complex procedures later.

The Role of Emergency Dental Care

An emergency-equipped dental office can provide immediate relief and definitive treatment. These clinics have diagnostic tools like digital X-rays to assess injury extent quickly. They can identify root fractures, displacements, or jaw fractures that require special care.

Long-Term Benefits of Early Dental Care

Starting dental assessments around age 6 helps identify developmental issues or malocclusion early. Early orthodontic intervention can improve both appearance and function. Regular visits also reinforce good habits, making children more likely to care for their teeth as they grow.

Final Thoughts

Ensuring your child's dental health during the back-to-school season involves prevention, preparedness, and prompt action. Instilling good habits, advocating for protective gear during sports, and knowing how to respond to emergencies can help your child enjoy a safe, healthy, and confident school year. A healthy, bright smile isn't just about looks—it's about overall well-being. Prioritize dental safety and routine care to protect your child's smile today and in the future.