

First, Clean Out Those Closets

August 6, 2010



Ah, the sounds and smells of summer! Little League, hot dogs, swimming pools, and lemonade stands ... and then, it's back to school? Yep. Though summer's in full swing, it's time to think about what you will need this year for your kids' back-to-school clothing and school supplies.

Before you read through a single back-to-school sales flyer, be sure of two things: what you need, and what you already have on hand.

We encourage you to get your kids involved in the first phase of the back-to-school (BTS) frenzy by hosting your family's first BTS closet and drawer archeology dig.

When To Do It

Saturday or Sunday, soon

What To Do

1. Know What's on the List? The Needs!
 - a. Often local discount and office supply stores have handy checklist kiosks for the neighboring schools; your schools' websites are another good source for supply lists. Download or grab each kid's checklists as your starting point for this year's BTS shopping list.
 - b. Assemble a clothing list for each of your kids and share it with them so they understand what is needed this year.
2. Know What You Already Have.

Clothes

 - a. Help your kids do an inventory of their closets. Figure out what still fits and what doesn't, what needs to be repaired or could be handed down. Maybe that fall skirt just needs a new button or the loose pocket repaired. There's no need to spring for a brand-new backpack if last year's is still in good shape.
 - b. Help your kids check off the clothing items you decide are keepers.
 - c. Pack/bag up the still-usable but outgrown stuff that some other kids could put to good use.

School Supplies

 - a. Help your kids do an inventory of the household drawers, filing cabinets, and garage storage areas for school supplies. Many items – like pencils, pens, notebooks, and scissors – may have been bought on long-ago shopping trips and can be found stashed under things or in an overlooked drawer.
 - b. Keep track of what your kids find by checking off items on your supply list.
 - c. Consider giving your kids a point for each item they find on the list. Total up the points at the end and hand out a small reward to each for a job well done.

Bonus: Have your kids calculate how much they helped save with the clothing and supply items they found.
3. Be Charitable.
 - a. If you have outgrown clothes to give away, donate them to a local nonprofit so your kids learn to give to others in need.
 - b. Bring your kids along to drop off the clothes and talk about the people who will receive what you give.

What You Will Need

- Time List of school supplies
- Paper and pencils or pens
- Bags for clothing donations
- Calculator

Talk About It

Did your kids find it hard to give up their clothes? Or were they reluctant to keep and reuse any of those old familiar items from last year? Did they have fun unearthing hidden treasures in drawers around the house? Were they surprised at how much they helped the family save?

