

Questions & Answers

Q: Getting three children out the door in the morning is hard! One day, someone won't get up. Another day, somebody else forgets a science book and has to go back for it. The result is that my kids usually miss the school bus and I end up driving them to school. What can I do?

A: Mornings are challenging in many households. But as long as your kids know there's an easy out—you will drive them to school—they don't have much incentive to change.

Here's how you can begin to turn things around:

- Call a family meeting. Announce that your “taxi service” has a new policy. From now on, rides to school come with a cost. Anyone who misses the bus and rides the “taxi” will have to pay the toll. You can choose the cost—perhaps it's part of your kids' allowance, or perhaps it means some extra time spent on chores. It doesn't have to be a high price, but it should be something your children want to avoid.
- Help your kids get organized at night. Have them lay out their outfits. Fill book bags. Pack lunches. And set alarm clocks to go off a few minutes earlier.
- Give a five-minute warning in the morning. Then calmly walk out the door and head for the bus stop. If a child comes racing along with one shoe on and the other in hand—well, figure you're giving the neighbors a chuckle.
- Enforce consequences once you set them. Odds are, you'll only have to collect your “taxi fare” once or twice before everyone gets better organized.

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