

The Three Steps of Starting School

When starting a new school, most children will go through some or all of the following stages:

Step one:

"Oh, this place is cool! So many kids to play with! So many interesting toys! My parent is leaving? I don't care, I'm too intrigued about what I can do here."

Step two:

"Hold on! Every time I go here, my parent leaves. I don't like this. Maybe it wasn't such a good idea to come here after all. I'm not sure if I can like this place if my parent goes away when I'm here. What happens if I cry? Does that make my parent stay?"

Step three:

"Ah, this is how it works! My parent leaves, but I STILL can have a good time and they will come BACK and pick me up. It's not that bad after all. I might still find it hard to say good bye, but I do like being here and know that my parent won't forget about me."

- * How intense each stage is and how long they last depends on the child.
- * Some children continue to display some degree of separation anxiety when the parent leaves. As long as the child settles within a few minutes, there is no reason to worry about this. We will ring you if your child does NOT settle quickly after you have left.
- * If your child displays intense and lasting unhappiness when you leave and finds it very hard to settle, and this lasts for more than just a few weeks, then the staff and parents will need to discuss this and find settling techniques more suitable for the child together

Things you can do to make it easier for your child:

- * Bring your child early so that there is enough time to settle in before the morning circle. We open the gates at 9:15am and usually start the morning circle around 9:40am.
- * Indicate to a teacher when you want to leave, so we can help your child if necessary.
- * Say goodbye to your child (even if this seems to make it worse at first - on the long run it will instill trust in your child that you won't just disappear and they will feel more secure).
- * Give your child permission to have a good time while you are away by saying things like *"You will be fine, the teachers will look after you while I'm away, and I'm sure you will have a good day. I will pick you up at the end of the day."*
- * Don't let your child know that you expect the drop off to be difficult. They might understand this as instructions on what you expect them to do.
- * Don't change your mind about leaving even when your child cries. Your child will feel more secure and will find it much easier to settle if there is no prolonged separation process (and, if you stay, the cries will probably be even louder next time, since it worked before). Trust your child that she / he can handle being away from you.
- * Arrange play dates with other GAP children to support your child in finding friends at the GAP. Ask us if you would like to know who your child likes to play with (some children have preferred play partners, others change throughout the day).

Find more information on www.spielwelt.org.au (go to "GAP" and follow the links)