

Being the New Kid in School



Written by Cassi Denari

2010 Cover Kids, Jarvis L. and Niegireia R. Photo by Kleinpeter Photography

You walk into the crowded cafeteria, scan the room looking for an open table and suddenly all eyes are on you...

Your peers have stopped mid-sentence, mid-bite, to look at you, to stare at the new kid.

The huge room goes quiet.

You feel your face flush, your cheeks turn red and suddenly you have forgotten how to breathe.

No, this is not a nightmare—it's your first day at a new school.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 2,000,000 families with children between the ages of 6 and 17, move around the United States every year. With those statistics, chances are your child is not going to be the only new kid at school.

It's never easy being the new kid, leaving the safety of your parents' warm car and stepping onto the grounds of that intimidating new school. No one knows you and yet everyone seems to be staring. You feel so alone.

But being the new kid at school doesn't have to be quite so scary. Here are a few simple steps for your child to follow if starting a new school is on the agenda this year.

Where's my class?

First, get the lay of the land. Visit your new school (preferably when no one else is there) or get a tour so you can find out where your classes are, test out your locker and learn your way to the library, gym and restrooms. Once you become familiar with your new school you won't be disoriented and distracted by the sea of new faces when that first day comes around. Instead, it will feel somewhat familiar: you'll know where you are and where you're going—and hopefully that will keep most of the butterflies out of your stomach.

The observation period

Next, take some time to note the people around you. Observe the clothes. Do you want to wear the type of clothes everyone else is wearing? Keep in mind that what may be trendy in one area of the country may not be in another. Do you want to do your own thing and be completely different? You might be surprised to find out that what you thought was different is what everyone else is doing at your new school.

What are you drawn to?

During your observation period, what group grabbed your attention and looked like fun?

Who do you want to hang out with? The athletes, the drama club, the academic crowd? Whether you're interested in chess, cheerleading or student government, there is most likely a group for you.

Changing schools can be intimidating, but it is also a great chance to start over, whether you thought you needed to or not. You can reinvent yourself. Be who you want to be, be who you really are.

Making friends

Once you've decided on the group you want to hang out with, get involved in their activities or studies, or even sit next to them in class. Even if the group seems to be established, still try to get involved. The more time you spend around the people you want to hang out with, the more likely you'll become friends.

Former new student, Amanda, 16, said, "The hardest part about being new was that everyone had already

grouped up. I felt like I didn't fit anywhere. There was no room left for me in any of the groups." But there is always room when you find the right people. And if a group excludes you, it's probably not the group you want to join anyway.

Being social

While infiltrating your way into the group of your choice, don't forget to also make friends in other groups. In school, as in life, the more people you know, the more fun you are likely to have. The key to making new friends is to find a common interest. You have six to seven classes with at least two potential friends sitting right next to you. Ask them a question or two, get a read of how open they are to chatting and find a common interest. Make eye contact and smile at your fellow students or even say hello. Be friendly without being desperate or annoying.

Lastly, be confident. It really doesn't matter if you're feeling it or not...just look it. And remember: you are the cool, mysterious new kid.

