

## BAGFUL OF DEALS

The back-to-school rush is more exciting than ever, with retailers offering a wide array of deals designed to make shopping both smart and enjoyable



The back-to-school season is no longer just about picking up pens, notebooks, and uniforms. It has become a celebratory experience, where shopping is elevated into an event filled with excitement, convenience, and creativity.

For families, this annual ritual marks more than the start of a new academic year – it's about preparation, bonding, and setting the tone for success. Retailers and brands, aware of this emotional significance, are innovating to make back-to-school promotions not just practical, but memorable.

### A celebration, not just a sale

Gone are the days when back-to-school shopping meant long queues at stationary stores and hurried

purchases. Today, malls, supermarkets, and online platforms transform the season into a festive occasion with themed decor, attractive discounts, interactive stalls, and even children's activities. The experience is curated to engage students and parents alike, making the process less of a chore and more of a joyful family outing.

### Beyond discounts

Of course, price reductions remain a major draw. But leading retailers are going a step further. Bundle deals on gadgets, and cashback rewards on school supplies create real value for families. Loyalty points, exclusive early-bird deals, and student membership cards further enhance the sense of privilege. For many, these promotions help parents manage budgets without compromising on quality or variety.

### Blending online and offline shopping

The digital transformation of retail has significantly redefined back-to-school shopping. Online platforms offer the convenience of browsing entire collections from home, with filters for age, grade, and product category. At the same time, physical stores complement this by creating immersive experiences, such as trial zones for school shoes, gadget demo corners, and personalization counters for backpacks. The combination ensures families can balance convenience with hands-on decision-making.



### Personalization is the new trend

Today's students want individuality reflected in their supplies. Retailers are tapping into this demand by offering customizable items – from engraved water bottles and name-tagged lunch boxes to backpacks in trendy colours and notebooks with personal covers. Such personalization not only makes shopping fun but also empowers children to express their identity, boosting excitement for the school year ahead.

### Making memories, not just purchases

Ultimately, what elevates back-to-school promotions is the transformation of shopping into a shared family memory. Whether it's a child picking their first backpack, a teenager testing a new gadget, or parents finding unbeatable deals, the process becomes a positive prelude to the academic journey ahead.

### Smart shopping starts here

- **Make a checklist** – Write down exactly what's needed to avoid impulse buys.
- **Set a budget** – Decide how much to spend on essentials before hitting the stores.
- **Take inventory at home** – Check what supplies, clothes, or gadgets from last year can still be used.
- **Shop early** – Beat the crowds and get the best deals before the rush.
- **Prioritize quality** – Invest in durable backpacks, shoes, and supplies that last the whole year.
- **Go eco-friendly** – Choose reusable bottles, lunchboxes, and sustainable stationery.
- **Compare prices online** – Use apps or websites to ensure you are getting the best value.
- **Involve kids in choices** – Let them pick colours or designs to get them excited for school.
- **Look for bundle deals** – Combo packs of stationery or uniforms often cost less.
- **Try online + in-store mix** – Shop basics online and save in-store trips for fittings or special items.

## READY SET SCHOOL

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6THSTREET.COM

BACK TO SCHOOL

BACK TO CLASS  
RIGHT ON TIME  
NOW DELIVERS  
IN  
90 MINS

all set

ready to learn

NEWEST COLLECTION

6

# Back to School with Gait Qatar: The Smartest Way to Gear Up with Apple



**T**his back-to-school season, Gait Qatar is your destination for everything Apple — with exclusive offers, unbeatable value, and the latest technology designed to help students achieve more. Whether you are heading back to school, starting university, or simply upgrading your tech game, Gait Qatar's back-to-school campaign is perfectly timed to give you a head start.

From the ultra-light MacBook Air with M4 to the versatile iPad with Apple Pencil, every Apple device is built to inspire creativity, boost productivity, and fit seamlessly into your student lifestyle. And with exclusive student benefits at Gait Qatar — including education discounts, trade-in offers, flexible payment plans, and expert support — it's never been easier to own the best tools for learning.

## MacBook Air with M4 – All Power, No Compromise

The world's most popular laptop is now more powerful and more affordable than ever. The new MacBook Air with M4 combines incredible performance, all-day battery life (up to 18 hours), and a stunning Liquid Retina display in a thin, light design that's built to last.

Powered by the M4 chip's 10-core CPU and up to 10-core GPU, it handles everything from complex research projects to video editing with ease. Apple Intelligence brings in next-level creativity with Writing Tools, Genemoji, and Image Playground — helping you work smarter, not harder.

Available in Sky Blue, Midnight, Starlight, and Silver, the MacBook Air is perfect for students who want style, speed, and reliability. With exclusive education pricing starting at just QAR\*3,299, now's the time to upgrade.

## iPad + Apple Pencil – Creativity Anywhere

For flexibility, portability, and creativity on the go, iPad with Apple Pencil is a must-have. Take handwritten lecture notes, annotate PDFs, create digital art, or collaborate on group projects — all in one device.



The Retina display makes every detail pop, while iPadOS delivers powerful multitasking with tools like Stage Manager and Split View. Pair it with the Magic Keyboard and you have a portable workstation ready for any assignment.

## Why Students Choose Apple from Gait Qatar

When you shop at Gait Qatar, you don't just get an Apple device — you get

the full student experience with benefits designed to make ownership easier, smarter, and more affordable:

- Education Discount – Special pricing for students, parents, and educators with valid ID.
- Trade-In & Guaranteed Buyback – Use our Trade-In Calculator to see the value of your old device instantly. Trade in now or enjoy guaranteed buyback later.
- Flexible Financing – Choose from installment plans or PayLater options to spread your payments easily.
- GaitCare – Protect your device with extended coverage, accidental damage protection, and more.
- Apple Authorised Service Provider – Expert repairs and genuine parts, right here in Qatar.
- Personal Setup – Get your new device fully set up in-store, ready to go from day one.
- Demo Sessions & Workshops – Learn tips, tricks, and skills to get the most out of your device.

## Exclusive Back-to-School Offer at Gait Qatar

From 10th August to 13th September 2025, enjoy:

- Extra Student Top-Up on top of the existing education discount.
- Special pricing across the MacBook Air M4 range.
- Minimum 10% educational discount on select Apple products.
- Instant gift vouchers on select purchases.

## Your Complete Apple Learning Setup

Pair your MacBook Air or iPad with accessories designed for productivity and protection:

- Apple Pencil (2nd generation) – For notes, sketches, and annotations.
- Magic Keyboard for iPad – Turn your iPad into a full typing workstation.
- AirPods – Clear sound for classes, online meetings, and entertainment.
- Protective Cases & Sleeves – Keep your tech safe and stylish.

## See It. Try It. Take It Home.

Visit Gait Qatar to experience the MacBook Air M4 and iPad with Apple Pencil first-hand. Their Apple-trained specialists can help you compare models, explore Apple Intelligence features, and choose the perfect setup for your needs.

Whether you want to trade in your old device, pay in easy installments, or get a personalised setup session, Gait Qatar got you covered. And with their Guaranteed Buyback program, your device will hold its value for when you are ready to upgrade.

Your education deserves the best tools:

From the lecture hall to late-night study sessions, creative projects to career-defining assignments — Gait Qatar and Apple are here to help you make it your best school year yet. Visit Gait Qatar today and power your learning with Apple.

\*Terms & conditions apply. Educational pricing available for eligible students, parents, and educators with valid proof of eligibility.





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# Back to School Smarter and Faster with 6thStreet.com in Qatar

**T**he start of the school year is always an exciting chapter. New classrooms, fresh notebooks, ambitious goals—and of course, the all-important back-to-school looks.

6thStreet.com understands that looking confident and feeling ready is just as important as being prepared with books and pens. That's why this season, they are bringing parents and students in Qatar something truly extraordinary: Back-to-School fashion delivered in just 90 minutes.

Because time is precious

We know how hectic back-to-school preparations can be. Between booklists, school runs, after-school activities, and family commitments, finding time to shop can feel impossible. Traditional shopping trips often mean traffic, queues, and hours lost. But with 6thStreet.com's new 90-minute delivery service in Qatar, parents and students can now get their fashion essentials faster than ever before — without stress, without delay.

Picture this: you realize the night before school starts that your child has outgrown their sneakers. Or maybe you've discovered that the backpack they've been using all year has finally given out. In the past, this meant rushing to the mall, hoping to find the right size, standing in line, and getting home exhausted. Today, that scenario changes completely. With just a few taps on the 6thStreet app, the right size, colour, and brand is on its way — delivered within 90 minutes.

From last-minute school shoes to backpacks, sportswear, or even a parent's office outfit for the first school drop-off, everything you need is now just 90 minutes away from your doorstep.



- **For the little ones:** Comfort comes first. Durable yet stylish sneakers, fun backpacks with personality, and easy-care clothing keep up with their energy and playfulness.
  - **For teens:** This is the age of self-expression. Trendy jeans, versatile tees, stylish footwear, and accessories that let them stand out while blending into school life.
  - **For parents & teachers:** Understanding that mornings can be

- **For parents & teachers.** Understanding that mornings can be hectic, 6thStreet.com offers a curated selection of polished modestwear, smart casuals, and comfortable shoes, making every school run effortless yet stylish.

With brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Adidas, Aldo, Levi's, Skechers, and Dune London, the whole family finds what they need in one place — with guaranteed authenticity. You don't need to shop multiple stores; 6thStreet.com has simplified the experience by curating a selection that meets every family's back-to-school needs.

Smarter Shopping for Smarter Futures

Back-to-school is about more than uniforms and supplies; it's about giving children the confidence to shine. The way they step into their first day matters. The right pair of sneakers can make them feel ready for the playground. The right backpack can make them proud to carry their books. The right outfit can make them feel seen and supported.

6thStreet.com sees fashion as more than clothing. It's an empowering tool for self-expression, individuality, and confidence — values that are as important in the classroom as they are in life. By merging technology, logistics, and fashion, they are ensuring that Qatar's families step into the new school year with ease and elegance. No waiting, no stress, just style on demand.

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**90 Minutes. 100% Authentic. 100% Convenient.**

Their first-of-its-kind service in Qatar is more than speed — it's about trust and reliability. Every product on 6thStreet.com is 100% authentic, sourced directly from the world's leading fashion and lifestyle brands. Parents can shop with confidence knowing that what they are buying for their children meets the highest standards of quality.

For parents, this is not just a time-saver. It's peace of mind.



## The Future of Shopping, Today

This launch of 90-minute delivery in Qatar is not only a milestone for 6thStreet.com, it's a promise to their customers: to keep innovating, keep listening, and keep making your lives simpler.

innovating, keep listening, and keep making your lives simpler. Parents sought convenience. Students wanted more choice. Families wanted authenticity and quality. This service is the answer to all three.

One key lesson has emerged: when parents save time, children gain more — more attention, more energy, and greater focus on what truly matters. This is precisely what 6thStreet.com aims to deliver this back-to-school season.

deliver this back-to-school season.

## Your Back-to-School Partner

Whether it's sneakers that can handle the playground, bags that fit everything, or fashion that helps parents juggle it all, 6thStreet.com is your trusted partner this back-to-school season.

With thousands of products, a wide range of brands, and delivery in just 90 minutes, they have made sure that the start of school is as stylish, smooth, and stress-free as possible.

This back-to-school season, save time, reduce stress, and step into style—all with 6thStreet.com.

## Fashion for Every Age & Stage

The back-to-school collection is designed to support every stage of the academic journey, from nursery to university, and even for the parents who are navigating the daily school routine.



# 2025 MAZDA CX-60 MHEV: NEW SKYACTIV PLATFORM DELIVERS EXCEPTIONAL DRIVING PLEASURE



The all-new Mazda CX-60, featuring a 3.3-litre inline 6-cylinder MHEV, has been introduced by National Car Company (NCC), the sole agent for Mazda vehicles in Qatar, marking 50 years of partnership in excellence with Mazda Corporation-Japan. Now available at the state-of-the-art Mazda showroom in Al Nasr, the model has generated tremendous excitement among SUV buyers in Qatar, resulting in exceptional sales momentum. The CX-60, with its unique front-engine, rear-wheel-drive (FR) layout, also marks the debut of the longitudinal version of Mazda's Skyactiv Multi-Solution Scalable Architecture platform.

Besides the newly introduced 3.3 litre inline 6-cylinder MHEV, 3 variants of Mazda CX-60 are available for sales in Qatar, equipped with a high performance 2.5-litre Skyactiv-G engine and 8 speed automatic transmission, all equipped with a whole range of new driver-centric technologies. All the models offer low emissions and excellent fuel efficiency with high levels of torque.

## Crafted in Japan

The all-new Mazda CX-60 represents everything that Mazda has built into its DNA over the last one hundred years: from the great design, both inside and out, to Japanese craftsmanship and new technologies, all focused on creating a fantastic experience for the driver and co-passengers.

## Less is More

There is a pure grace to be found in the simplicity and sparse beauty of a traditional Japanese garden which exemplifies the design principle of "less is more." This principle was deftly applied to the new Mazda CX-60, imbuing the car with a subtle yet strong appearance. The car is in harmony with the surrounding nature, a value that is important in Japanese life, rather than attempting to dominate it as some of the contemporary SUVs often do.



## Human Centricity

While getting behind the steering wheel, comfortable seating position is extremely important to enjoy the pleasure of driving. The optimum positioning of the driver has always been a key component in any Mazda vehicle's development. However, Mazda researchers recently discovered that less than half of drivers position themselves correctly for comfort, safety and control and new Mazda CX-60 gives a lot of emphasis to this aspect.

## A Richer Life

Mazda believes that a car should truly enrich your life, and the interior of the new Mazda CX-60 has been crafted with this vision in mind. It is not just a stylish and comfortable place to enjoy every journey, but a mindful zone with a design that takes inspiration from nature and Japan's rich culture infused with modern techniques and principles so that it is superbly functional as well as beautiful.

## New Rhodium White Colour Exemplifies Simple Elegance

Mazda designers went to great lengths to create a new special paint called Rhodium White, which was crafted specifically to highlight the beauty of the CX-60's design. As light flows over the bodywork, the surrounding environment is reflected in its surfaces creating a sensation of the car being in harmony with the world. The vehicle does not simply look white, the light reflects onto it to give it a metallic look shows the contrasting light and shadow."

## ALL-NEW SCALABLE PLATFORM WITH LONGITUDINAL ENGINE:

Engineered to give exhilarating responses that are also friendly to the environment, CX-60's front-engine rear-wheel-drive (FR) layout is the debut of the longitudinal version of its Skyactiv Multi-Solution Scalable Architecture platform. This all-new platform accommodates both four- and six-cylinder longitudinal engines of any capacity, as well as diverse electrification technologies such as M Hybrid mild hybrid system. Guided by Mazda's unique Skyactiv-Vehicle Architecture concept, the CX-60 is designed to work in harmony with the human body's natural ability to maintain balance while in motion. This ensures that drivers remain in full command of the enhanced power of the newly developed engine. The result is a driving experience where you can comfortably maintain a relaxed, well-balanced posture while enjoying the exhilaration of controlling G-forces in diverse driving situations.

## i-ACTIV AWD:

CX-60's longitudinal powertrain layout allows i-Activ AWD to give you the best of both worlds: the neutral cornering characteristics of a rear-wheel-drive system combined with the reassuring stability of all-wheel drive. This full-time AWD system primarily delivers power to

the rear wheels for the superior handling associated with the sports car's classic FR configuration, yet continuously monitors driving conditions to dynamically direct power to any of the four wheels as necessary. The result is a new level of high-speed, straight-line stability on highways, inspiring handling on winding roads, and reliably stable traction on snow or slippery surfaces.

## KINEMATIC POSTURE CONTROL (KPC)

At the front, the CX-60 features a double-wishbone suspension system, optimally engineered to take full advantage of the additional space provided by the longitudinal powertrain layout. At the rear, a multi-link setup ensures stability and control. Complementing this is Mazda's newly developed Kinematic Posture Control (KPC), which enhances the suspension's strengths by delivering smoother body movement during everyday driving while effectively suppressing body roll in high-speed cornering.



## MAZDA PROACTIVE SAFETY

True driving pleasure requires more than just vehicle response and performance. It also demands the peace of mind that comes with feeling safe, secure and in control. In line with its human-centered design philosophy, Mazda Proactive Safety is engineered around you, the driver, to support you in anticipating and assessing your driving environment moment by moment, helping you to recognize and avoid danger beforehand rather than react after a hazardous situation has developed. i-Activsense with its full spectrum of remote sensing devices provides continuous 360° monitoring around the vehicle and alerts you to potential threats. And when necessary, its advanced autonomous control/brake systems assist in staying out of harm's way.

## Panoramic Sunroof

The large panoramic sunroof provides an expansive top view and brings light to the entire cabin, delivering an open, airy feel to passengers in the front and rear alike.

## Qi wireless charger

The center console tray includes a Qi wireless charger to enable charging of compatible smartphones and other devices placed on it when the engine is running.



## Handsfree Tailgate Function

With the advanced key in your pocket or bag, a quick kick beneath the sensor located under the rear bumper lets you open and close the rear power liftgate, a convenient feature when your hands are full or when you don't want to touch the car because it is wet or muddy.

## ADVANCED ACOUSTIC ENVIRONMENT

A supremely quiet cabin sets the stage for top-quality in-car audio, and the CX-60 achieves this through its rigid body structure, which minimizes unwanted noise and vibration with extensive sound insulation and NVH measures. Building on this foundation, Mazda's unique Harmonic Acoustics initiative delivers a breathtaking audio experience for every passenger. Making its debut in an automotive sound system, Master Sound Revive Noise Reduction (MSR NR) further elevates the experience by drastically reducing low-level noise that can cloud the clarity of music, bringing sound reproduction closer to the artist's original intention. The result is an unprecedented level of listening pleasure for everyone, no matter where they are seated.

All New Mazda CX-60 variants are on display and for sale at the state-of-the-art Mazda showroom located at Al Nasr, Doha.

NEW 2025 MAZDA CX-90 MILD HYBRID  
ALL IN PERFECT BALANCE

**SKYACTIV TECHNOLOGY**

**i-ACTIVSENSE**

**MZD CONNECT**

**5 UNLIMITED KM WARRANTY**

**2025 IIHS TOP SAFETY PICK+**

**KODO: SOUL OF MOTION**

**HUMAN CENTRIC COCKPIT**

**PRECISE CONTROL**

**DRIVER PERSONALIZATION SYSTEM**

**PANORAMIC SUNROOF**

**HANDS FREE POWER TAILGATE**

MAZDA CX-90 3.3L INLINE-6 TURBO AWD | 3-ROW 8-SEATER SUV

A new kind of family luxury, First-Ever Hybrid Mazda CX-90 welcomes you to a world of perfect balance. Designed to enrich your life, crafted for your comfort and that of everyone around you, curated for meaningful experiences together.

# Auto Class Cars launches a special Summer offer on selected MG cars

The offer is valid until 30 September 2025 on MG ONE, MG HS, and MG RX9

**A**uto Class Cars, the authorized general distributor of MG in Qatar, launched a special Summer offer on selected cars of MG with benefits and the option to pay the monthly instalments starting next year.

Running until 30 September 2025, the Summer offer is valid on MG ONE, MG HS, and MG RX9. The full range of MG cars are presented at Auto Class Showroom, the authorized Distributor of MG in Qatar, at its showrooms on Salwa Road and Lusail.



Customers can get a new MG ONE for a monthly installment starting from QAR 1,550, MG HS for monthly installment of 1,666, and MG RX9 for monthly installment of 2,299, with 10% down payment and flexible plans to pay in 2026. The offer allows new buyers to leverage several benefits including 1-year free registration and comprehensive insurance, free window tinting, and trade-in option. The MG continues its strong legacy with its longest-period warranty that lasts for 6 years or 200,000 km.

## MG ONE

The MG ONE harnesses the latest technology with the introduction of SAIC Motor's self-developed all-new modular SIGMA architecture platform, housing a 1.5 Turbo unit delivering 181hp and max. torque of 285Nm – powering the vehicle to a top speed of 195 km/h. All models are equipped with an innovative seven-speed Continuously Variable Transmission for smoother, more efficient gear changes and optimum reliability.

The sporty mid-size SUV's aggressive look is emphasised by a new three-dimension front grill, shifting downwards, flanked by sharp-looking LED headlamps. The MG ONE's athletic look is highlighted through a dual-tone colour scheme, a low and wide stance, sloping roofline, giving it a couple-like silhouette, split rear protruding lights and a distinctive sport spoiler with a cut-out.



## MG HS

The MG HS offers exceptional value for money. With its sporty design and advanced features, the new MG HS is perfect for younger buyers seeking passion, drive and control in their everyday adventures. It is designed to stand out in the competitive mid-size SUV segment, offering a perfect balance of style, performance, and technology. Its five-star Euro NCAP safety rating highlights MG's commitment to safety, with the Level 2 Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) providing added convenience and protection.

Under the bonnet, the new MG HS offers two powerful and efficient engine options. Drivers can choose between a 1.5T powerplant, delivering 173 hp with a 7-speed dual-clutch transmission, or the 2.0T engine, producing 231 hp with a 9-speed automatic transmission. These engines, coupled with superior handling dynamics and enhanced NVH (Noise, Vibration, and Harshness) levels, make every drive smooth, responsive, and exhilarating. The sporty three-spoke squircle steering wheel adds a touch of dynamism, ensuring an engaging driving experience that matches the SUV's bold character.

## MG RX9

The MG RX9 premium SUV combines elegant design, advanced technology, and powerful driving performance. It represents the next level of luxurious SUV experience, dedicated for modern lifestyle suitable for both city and outdoor use. It is available in two distinct trim levels: the mid-tier COM 2.0 Turbo, and the top-tier LUX 2.0 Turbo. Designed to meet the needs of modern families, travel enthusiasts, and drivers who desire comfort and capability in a 7-seater configuration.

The new MG RX9 offers a blend of modern design, power, and versatility, ensuring the new model offers remarkable value for its class. Additionally, customers will benefit from a generous 6-year/200,000 km manufacturer's warranty, providing exceptional peace of mind.

The MG RX9's robust and striking exterior design ensures it stands out on the road. At 1967mm wide, it has the widest body in its class, providing a powerful yet elegant presence on the road. The vehicle's Starburst Wing Grille, integrated with the sleek headlight design featuring 245 laser-engraved LED light units, further enhances its striking front profile. Complementing this dynamic front face are 21-inch wheels, which not only elevate the vehicle's look but also ensure stability and performance on various terrains. The MG RX9 comes in six exterior colours inspired by nature, offering a choice to suit all drivers' preferences.



## DRIVE NOW, PAY IN



**MG ONE**  
STARTING FROM 1,550 QAR/ MONTH



**MG RX9**  
STARTING FROM 2,299 QAR/ MONTH



**MG HS**  
STARTING FROM 1,666 QAR/ MONTH

**FREE**  
REGISTRATION

**FREE**  
ONE-YEAR COMPREHENSIVE  
INSURANCE

**FREE**  
WINDOW TINTING

**10%**  
DOWN PAYMENT +  
FLEXIBLE EMI PLANS IN 2026

**TRADE-IN**  
OPTION AVAILABLE

**UP TO 6-MONTH  
DEFERRED PAYMENT\***

**6** YEAR 200,000 KM \*\*  
REGION'S BEST MANUFACTURER'S WARRANTY

This offer is valid from 10th of July until 30th of September, 2025.

\*DEFERRED PAYMENT VARIES BY MODEL: UP TO 6 MONTHS FOR 2025 MODELS AND 3 MONTHS FOR 2024 MODELS.

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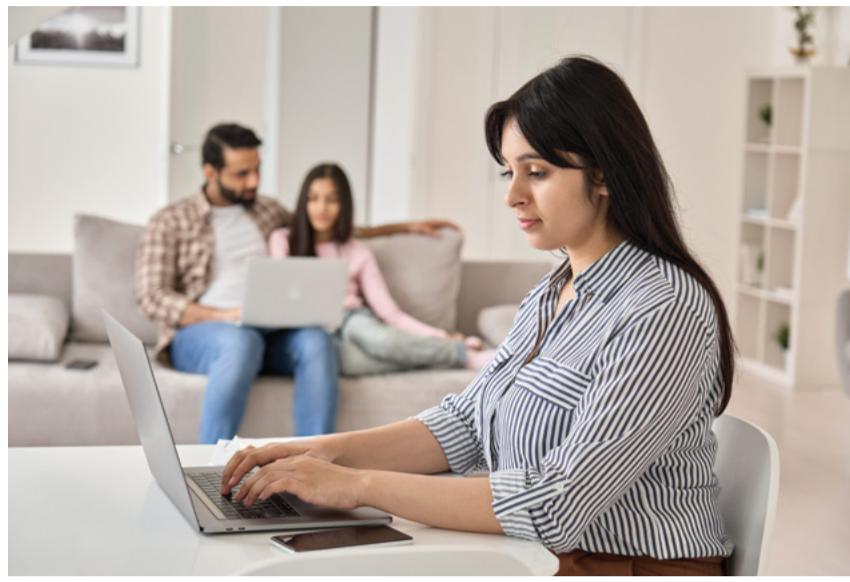
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# SUPPORT, SACRIFICE, AND STRENGTH

Read on to discover how working parents across Qatar make the shift from easygoing summer routines to the fast-paced rhythm of early mornings, school drop-offs, homework, and after-school activities



By Sara Ali

The weekend often calls for lazy mornings and much-needed relaxation. Phones are best kept on silent, but one Saturday mine wouldn't stop buzzing. With some reluctance, I picked it up. It was Ramsha, my cousin's wife. Her husband Ammar works in Qatar Airways, and the two of them are new parents. Alongside caring for her baby, Ramsha is also pursuing a Bachelor of Education degree.

When I called her back, she explained her predicament. Her mother—who had been helping with the newborn—had to urgently return to India, leaving her without support. Naturally, I offered to help, but we soon realized that a more permanent solution was needed: a daycare or creche.

That moment triggered a wave of memories for me. Having lived in Qatar for almost twenty-five years and worked as a teacher for most of that time, I've experienced firsthand the challenges of raising children without extended family around. When my daughter was just one-and-a-half, I began my first teaching job. Like so many expat mothers, I had no family nearby to lean on.

Fortunately, a friend who ran her own creche came to my rescue. Leaving my daughter in such a familiar environment

for a few hours each day gave me the peace of mind I needed to focus on my work. Both of my children completed their schooling here. The schools provided a safe, nurturing space for working mothers, offering supervised staybacks and extra support during long days.

Coming back to the present, Ramsha and Ammar now live in an Ezdan compound. While discussing options, my friend Zarine—herself a mother of four and a small business owner—shared an important discovery: many compounds have their own daycare facilities. Her youngest child had once attended the playgroup in their compound until he joined his siblings in school. Some compounds even offer early childhood



Zarine and Zubair with their son

programs with specialized toddler activity areas. This network of facilities has quietly become a lifeline for many expat parents.

In the end, Ramsha's problem was solved when her mother-in-law flew in from India to help. But the search itself revealed how much support structures for families in Qatar have evolved. Licensed nurseries follow strict safety and developmental standards, ensuring peace of mind for parents.

For working parents, the daily routine is universally familiar: hurried breakfasts, the school run, battling traffic, long workdays, and then evenings packed with homework, after-school activities, and family time squeezed in between. It often feels like an impossible balancing act—but parents are finding ways to make it work.

Over the years, after-school options and supervised staybacks have become increasingly available, helping families manage the workload.

Still, the heavier burden often falls on mothers.

*"It can feel like you're doing two full-time jobs,"* admits Amal, a working mother of three.

*"Even with help at home, the emotional energy required for both work and family is intense."*

Recognizing this, flexible work policies are easing the strain. Some employees now benefit from shorter workdays with flexible start times, and mothers in public institutions can leave early during school vacations.

*"These policies are a game-changer,"* says Sara, an HR manager in Doha.

*"I can drop my kids to school without panic, and I know other parents who finally feel they can breathe a little."*



But beyond policies, true balance comes from the home. Fathers are stepping up to share the workload, while friends often become an extended family—helping with pick-ups, drop-offs, or babysitting. Personally, I'm forever grateful to my friends Sadia and Ishrat, who stepped in countless times to support me and my children.

On parenting forums, parents share tips: meal-prep on weekends, setting "no work zones" at home, and prioritizing self-care.

*"I realized if I don't take care of myself, I can't take care of my kids,"* says Noor, a working mother of two.

*"I schedule early-morning walks before my household wakes up to stay energized and balanced."*

Some parents also find relief in nurseries.



Ankita and Vikas with their two boys

## Practical Tips for Parents in Qatar

- **Plan smartly:** Organize school bags and meals the night before.
- **Divide and share:** Split chores with partners or hire support where possible.
- **Draw boundaries:** Protect evenings or weekends as family-only time.
- **Prioritize well-being:** Sleep, exercise, and hobbies are not luxuries—they are fuel.
- **Build your village:** Rely on community networks, schools, and parenting groups.

*"It does take a village to raise a baby,"* says Ankita, a mother of two who works full-time.

*"I was exhausted doing nonstop 24/7 mommy duty, so I enrolled my younger one in a nursery. I immediately saw a huge difference in his personality."*

*"Now, with a full-time nanny assisting me until both parents return from work, I can manage my career and family more confidently."*

For many expat families, Qatar offers unexpected advantages: lower financial pressure compared to Western cities, affordable domestic help, and strong school networks.

*"Living here has transformed me as a parent,"* says one mother who recently relocated from the UK.

*"I work fewer hours, and I'm more present for my children."*

The journey toward work-life balance is ongoing, and cultural expectations often place a heavier load on women. But with planning, support, and community, balance is achievable—even if imperfect.

For me, inspiration has always come from my own parents. Though they lived in another country and belonged to a different generation, both worked full-time while raising us. My father was hands-on, and every family moment—even in the pre-internet era—felt meaningful.

Every family has its own rhythm, and each finds its own balance. I'll close with the wisdom my mother always reminded me of:

*"We can't always do everything perfectly, but balance is about finding what matters most each day—and giving yourself grace for the rest."*

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## BACK TO SCHOOL

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# Bouncing back after Vacation

## Tips to beat back-to-school slump

**With the right approach, returning to school can feel not like a punishment, but a refreshing opportunity to reset goals, reconnect socially, and take on challenges with renewed energy**

**R**eturning to school after a long, leisurely vacation can feel like jumping into a cold pool without warning. For weeks, your mornings may have started late, your nights stretched into the early hours, and your daily routine revolved around fun, relaxation, or travel.

Suddenly, the alarm clock rings at an uncomfortably early hour, the backpack feels heavier, and the pile of schoolwork seems insurmountable. This transitional slump is often called a "vacation hangover," a state where both mind and body struggle to adjust from a relaxed, unstructured rhythm to the demands of school life.

While it's normal to feel groggy, distracted, or even unmotivated, there are strategies that can help students regain energy, focus, and confidence as the new term begins.

With the right approach, returning to school can feel not like a punishment, but a refreshing opportunity to reset goals, reconnect socially, and take on challenges with renewed energy.



### 1. Reset your sleep schedule gradually

During vacation, sleeping patterns often drift later into the night. Whether it is binge-watching series, late-night gaming, or family gatherings, staying up past midnight can make waking up early a painful ordeal. Experts recommend adjusting your sleep schedule gradually, starting a week or two before school begins.

Shift your bedtime 15–30 minutes earlier each night and align your wake-up time with your school schedule. This incremental approach prevents the shock of suddenly waking up hours earlier than your body is used to.

Morning sunlight can reinforce your internal clock, stimulating hormones like cortisol to boost alertness. Even a short walk outside or a few minutes of sunlight exposure while having breakfast can make mornings feel less sluggish.

Similarly, keeping your bedroom dark at night and avoiding screens 30–60 minutes before bedtime helps signal your brain that it's time to sleep. Over a few days, this gentle adjustment can make early mornings feel natural rather than torturous.

### 2. Reintroduce structure to your day

Vacations are synonymous with freedom, spontaneity, and flexibility. While enjoyable, this lack of routine makes the return to school feel jarring. To ease the transition, reintroduce structure gradually.

Begin by planning daily activities, including breakfast, study blocks, exercise, and relaxation. You might create a simple schedule with start and end times for each activity.

The key is not to overwhelm yourself immediately. Start with just a few structured blocks per day and expand as you adjust.

For example, wake up at your target school time, spend an hour reviewing notes or reading, have a healthy breakfast, and then engage in a short physical activity or hobby. Over the course of a week, these mini-structures help retrain your brain and body for the rhythm of school life.



### 3. Rebalance your diet and hydration

Vacation indulgences, late-night snacks, sugary treats, fast food, or irregular meal timings, can leave your body fatigued, affecting energy levels, mood, and concentration. To combat this, reintroduce balanced meals rich in protein, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

A wholesome breakfast is particularly critical: it jumpstarts metabolism, fuels the brain, and supports sustained concentration throughout the morning.

Hydration is equally essential. Drinking water regularly improves alertness, reduces fatigue, and helps your body recover from any dietary excesses during vacation. Students should also avoid excessive caffeine or sugary drinks, which can cause energy spikes followed by crashes, making it harder to settle into a productive school routine.

### 4. Warm up your brain gradually

Transitioning from a relaxed, entertainment-heavy vacation to focused academic work can feel mentally exhausting. Before school begins, it helps to engage in light mental exercises to "warm up" your brain. Reading a novel, solving puzzles,

practicing math problems, or reviewing last term's notes can gradually reintroduce cognitive effort.

Even a small routine—20–30 minutes a day—can help rebuild concentration and improve memory recall. Students returning from a long vacation often underestimate the benefits of this gradual mental preparation, but it can make the first week of school significantly smoother, reducing frustration and stress.

### 5. Reconnect socially and emotionally

School is not just an academic space; it's also a social environment. After weeks of family-focused or solitary vacation time, students may feel disconnected from peers or hesitant to re-engage. Actively reconnecting with classmates, teachers, and friends can make the transition easier and more enjoyable.

Attending pre-term social events, engaging in group chats, or even sharing vacation stories with peers can restore a sense of belonging. Social engagement stimulates the brain's reward system, boosting mood and motivation. Students who ease into social interactions tend to feel more confident and less anxious about the first days back, making it easier to settle into academic routines.

### 6. Move your body to shake off sluggishness

Physical activity is one of the fastest ways to combat vacation lethargy. Regular exercise, even for 10–15 minutes a day, increases circulation, releases endorphins, and improves focus. Students can choose simple activities: morning walks, jogging, yoga, stretching routines, or sports they enjoy. For those returning from particularly sedentary vacations, starting small is key. Even light movement, such as a few stretches or a short walk before breakfast, signals to the body that it's time to transition into an active, alert state. Over time, consistent movement not only reduces fatigue but also builds resilience against the stress of schoolwork.

### 7. Set small, achievable goals

Trying to do everything at once—catch up on assignments, participate in clubs, socialise, and

**The key is not to overwhelm yourself immediately. Start with just a few structured blocks per day and expand as you adjust**

adjust to new schedules—can feel overwhelming. The solution is to set small, realistic goals for the first week or two. For example, aim to complete one assignment per day, review a few pages of notes, or consistently wake up at your target time. Achieving these small milestones builds momentum and confidence, helping students feel in control rather than stressed. Celebrating minor successes keeps motivation high and reinforces the benefits of a structured routine.



### 8. Minimise distractions early on

Vacation habits often involve extended screen time, video games, and social media scrolling. While enjoyable during leisure, these activities can hinder focus when returning to school. Designating specific times for entertainment while dedicating blocks of uninterrupted time for study is essential.

Students can use apps that block distracting websites or notifications during study periods, creating a focused environment. Reducing distractions early helps the brain switch from a relaxed, entertainment-centered state to a goal-oriented mindset, smoothing the path toward academic productivity.

### 9. Practice mindfulness and stress management

Even with the best routines, the transition back to school can be stressful. Assignments, deadlines, and social pressures can overwhelm students, especially during the first week. Mindfulness practices, meditation, or simple breathing exercises can help manage stress and improve focus.

Taking a few minutes each morning to reflect, visualise goals, or simply breathe deeply can reset the mind. By managing stress proactively, students approach school with clarity and composure, reducing anxiety and improving overall well-being.

### 10. Reward yourself wisely

Finally, it's important to maintain a balance between discipline and enjoyment. Students should reward themselves for completing tasks or sticking to routines, even in small ways. Finishing an assignment, waking up on time for three consecutive days, or completing a study session without distraction can be celebrated with a short leisure activity, a treat, or some downtime.

These mini-rewards maintain motivation, make the transition enjoyable, and reinforce positive habits without turning school into a purely restrictive experience.





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# The ultimate back-to-school checklist

The back-to-school season carries with it a mix of excitement, nervous anticipation, and the need for careful preparation. Whether it's the first day of primary school or a return to high school or university, students face one common reality: being well-prepared sets the tone for success.

Parents, teachers, and students alike know that the right tools — from stationery to uniforms and gadgets — can make the difference between a stressful first week and a smooth, confident transition.



## Stationery: Building the Foundation for Learning

Stationery has always been the bedrock of academic readiness. Pens, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, and rulers may seem simple, but they are the instruments that turn ideas into reality on paper. For younger students, colorful notebooks, sketch pads, and highlighters make lessons more engaging, while for older students, organized binders and planners help track assignments and deadlines. A sturdy backpack to carry these essentials ensures that everything has its place, reducing the risk of forgotten homework or misplaced notes.

Beyond the basics, modern stationery includes creative tools such as sticky notes for quick reminders, index cards for revision, and whiteboard markers for brainstorming at home. Many students now also use digital-analog hybrids, such as smart notebooks that can scan written notes into a phone app, merging traditional writing with digital convenience. The key is to strike a balance: while technology is advancing, the tactile satisfaction of pen on paper continues to aid memory and concentration in ways that screens sometimes cannot.



## Uniforms: Dressing for Confidence and Comfort

The uniform is more than just a school dress code; it is a symbol of discipline, belonging, and equality. A well-fitted uniform instills confidence in students, helping them walk into the classroom feeling part of a larger community. For parents, the back-to-school period often involves making sure their children's uniforms are ready — washed, pressed, and, when needed, newly purchased to accommodate growth spurts.

Accessories like ties, belts, socks, and polished shoes often complete the picture. Comfort is equally important: poorly fitted uniforms can distract students from focusing on their lessons. Today, many schools are increasingly mindful of incorporating fabrics that are breathable and durable, ensuring that children remain comfortable during long hours of study or physical activity. Parents, meanwhile, often buy multiple sets of uniforms to ease the weekly laundry cycle and to make sure their children are always prepared for the next school day.

For older students and university-goers, where formal uniforms may not be required, dressing appropriately still matters. A few sets of smart casual clothes can help create the right mindset for serious study while still allowing space for self-expression.

## Gadgets:

### Tools of the Modern Classroom

No back-to-school checklist in today's world is complete without



gadgets. Technology has transformed the learning landscape, and gadgets are no longer just luxuries but necessities. For many students, a reliable laptop or tablet serves as the cornerstone of their academic toolkit, allowing them to take notes, conduct research, and complete assignments with ease. Smartphones, while sometimes criticized for being distractions, also play a vital role when used wisely — with access to language-learning apps, research databases, productivity planners, and even digital textbooks.

Other useful devices include noise-cancelling headphones for focused study sessions, USB drives or cloud storage subscriptions to back up assignments, and e-readers that lighten the load of carrying multiple books. Younger students may require simpler tools such as a basic calculator, while older students might need advanced scientific calculators or even specialized software for math, science, or design subjects.

The challenge lies in making technology work for learning rather than against it. Parents and educators often encourage boundaries, ensuring gadgets are used for productivity and not just for entertainment. With the right apps and tools, however, gadgets can become powerful allies in the pursuit of academic success.



## Beyond the Basics:

### Preparing the Mindset

While the tangible checklist items are essential, the ultimate preparation for school is not just about what's in the bag but also what's in the mind. Parents can help children ease into the school year by establishing routines before classes begin: setting sleep schedules, practicing time management, and even holding family discussions about goals for the year ahead. Having stationery neatly packed, uniforms ready, and gadgets charged creates a sense of calm and order that translates into confidence on the first day.

## A Checklist for Success

Back-to-school preparation is a ritual that combines tradition and modernity. The stationery provides the building blocks of learning, uniforms create a sense of identity and belonging, and gadgets connect students to the limitless opportunities of the digital age. Together, these elements form a complete checklist that ensures students step into the academic year not just prepared, but inspired to achieve.

Ultimately, the back-to-school season is more than just ticking off items from a list. It is about creating an environment of readiness, resilience, and excitement — setting the stage for learning, growth, and the many small victories that shape a successful school year.

## How to create a perfect study space at home

A well-designed study space at home can transform the way students focus, learn, and succeed throughout the school year



When it comes to excelling in school, most students focus on books, gadgets, or study schedules. But what often goes unnoticed is the environment in which learning takes place. A well-organized, comfortable, and inspiring study space at home can make a huge difference in concentration, motivation, and overall productivity. Creating such a space doesn't necessarily require a lot of money — it's more about intention, planning, and thoughtful choices.

### The importance of a dedicated study space

Human brains are wired to associate spaces with activities. Just as we feel relaxed in a cozy bedroom or energized in a gym, a dedicated study space trains the brain to switch into "focus mode" whenever one sits down there. Without it, students often end up studying on beds or couches, which can invite distraction and laziness. Establishing a consistent environment signals to the mind that this is a place for learning, not leisure.



### Choosing the right spot

The first step is location. Not every household has a spare room, but even a quiet corner can be transformed into an effective study zone. Ideally, the spot should be away from heavy foot traffic, television noise, and kitchen activity. For younger children, it may be near enough to parents to provide supervision; for older students, privacy matters more. The key is balance — quiet enough to encourage focus but comfortable enough to spend hours without discomfort.



### The role of lighting

Lighting plays a critical role in maintaining energy and preventing fatigue. Natural light is best, as it reduces eye strain and boosts mood. Position the desk near a window if possible, but ensure sunlight does not cause glare on screens or books. When natural light isn't available, invest in a good desk lamp with adjustable brightness. Warm white light can create a cozy atmosphere, while cool white light can enhance alertness during late-night study sessions.

### Furniture that supports learning

The furniture you choose directly impacts posture, health, and concentration. A sturdy desk at the right height and an ergonomic chair are worth the investment, especially for students who spend long hours studying. Avoid beds and couches, as these often lead to slouching or even falling



asleep mid-study. The chair should support the back, and feet should rest comfortably on the floor. For younger children, adjustable furniture that grows with them can be practical.

#### Organization: A key to clarity

Clutter can be the enemy of concentration. A messy desk tends to reflect and amplify a messy mind. Keep only the essentials—books, stationery, and digital devices—within easy reach. Use shelves, drawers, and organizers to store extra items. Labels, boxes, and folders can make it easier to find what's needed quickly. A clean desk not only improves focus but also instills discipline and reduces wasted time searching for things.



#### Balancing technology and distraction

In today's digital learning world, laptops, tablets, and smartphones are necessary. But they are also potential distractions. Keep digital devices essential for studying within reach, but avoid unnecessary gadgets or open apps that tempt multitasking. For younger children, parents can set limits and use parental controls. For older students, self-discipline tools such as website blockers or focus apps can help. A charging station nearby can keep everything powered up without cluttering the desk with tangled cables.

#### Personal touches for inspiration

A study space shouldn't feel like a sterile office. Adding a personal touch makes it inviting and motivating. A small plant can bring freshness and calm. Motivational quotes or vision boards on the wall can inspire focus during tough days. Some students prefer soothing background music or a calming candle, while others thrive in silence. The trick is to make the space reflect one's personality while keeping it simple and distraction-free.

#### Establishing a study routine

Even the best-designed study space won't be effective unless it is used consistently. Encourage students to sit at their study space at the same time each day to build a habit. Over time, the brain will automatically associate the space with productivity, making it easier to focus. A tidy-up ritual after study hours—such as clearing the desk and stacking books—can make the next day's learning more welcoming.



#### Creating zones for different needs

For families with multiple children, it may be helpful to create zones within the same area. One corner can be for reading, another for art and creativity, and a third for digital learning. This division not only prevents conflict but also provides variety, which is especially useful for younger learners with shorter attention spans.

#### A space that grows with the student

A perfect study space is not static. As children grow older, their needs evolve—from colorful crayons and craft materials to laptops and research journals. The study space should be flexible enough to adapt over the years. Investing in adjustable shelves, modular desks, and versatile lighting ensures the space remains relevant throughout different stages of education.



## Back to school the healthy way

**G**oing back to school after a refreshing summer vacation is the perfect opportunity to reset routines and cultivate healthy habits that will carry students through the months ahead with energy, focus, and resilience. Good habits, when established at the beginning of the year, set the tone for academic success and overall well-being, making the transition from carefree vacation days to structured school life smoother and more positive.



#### The power of a nutritious start

Breakfast is often called the most important meal of the day, and for good reason. A balanced breakfast fuels the brain, improves concentration, and helps children stay alert in class. Instead of sugary cereals or quick processed snacks, parents can prepare wholesome options such as oatmeal with fruits, whole-grain toast with eggs, or smoothies packed with vegetables and protein.

Just as importantly, packing a lunchbox filled with colourful fruits, lean proteins, and whole grains ensures that children maintain steady energy levels throughout the day. Nutritious eating not only supports physical growth but also strengthens mental performance, giving students an advantage in their studies.

#### Sleep and rest

After a summer of late nights and relaxed schedules, students often struggle to return to a consistent sleep routine. Yet, quality sleep is vital for memory, learning, and emotional well-being.

Experts recommend that school-age children and teenagers get between 8–10 hours of sleep per night. Families can help by establishing a bedtime routine—dimming lights, limiting screen use an hour before sleep, and encouraging relaxing pre-bed activities such as reading. A well-rested child is more attentive in class, less irritable, and better equipped to handle the challenges of school life.

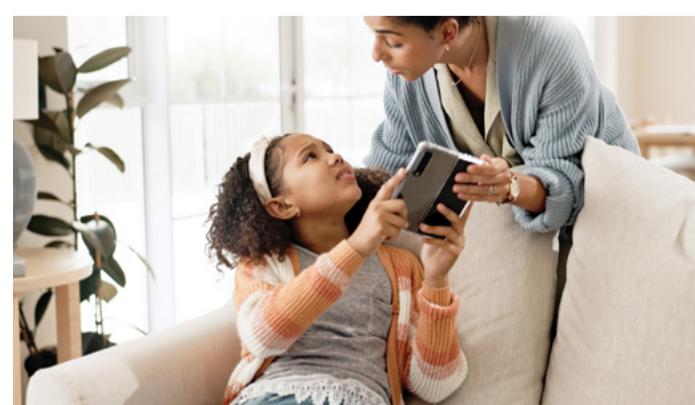
#### Staying active every day

While schoolwork often takes precedence, physical activity should remain a non-negotiable part of a child's daily routine. Exercise stimulates blood flow to the brain, reduces stress, and keeps the body strong.

Whether it's joining a school sports team, cycling with friends, practicing yoga, or simply walking to school, staying active keeps children energized and helps balance the hours spent sitting at desks. Even 30 minutes of moderate activity a day can make a remarkable difference in mood, focus, and long-term health.

#### Hydration for focus and energy

It's easy for students to forget to drink enough water during the school day, especially with busy schedules and limited access to drinking fountains. Yet dehydration can lead to fatigue, headaches, and poor concentration. A simple solution is to encourage children to carry a refillable water bottle to school and make hydration a habit just like handwashing or brushing teeth. Choosing water over sugary drinks also promotes lifelong healthy choices.



#### Managing screen time

Technology has become an inseparable part of education, with tablets, laptops, and online resources playing a central role. However, unregulated screen time—particularly for gaming and social media—can disrupt sleep, strain eyesight, and reduce productivity.

Families can create balanced rules: allocating specific hours for school-related screen use, encouraging regular breaks using the "20-20-20" rule (every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds), and promoting offline hobbies such as reading, painting, or outdoor play. Healthy digital habits ensure that technology remains a tool for growth rather than a source of distraction.

#### Building emotional resilience

Back to school can bring excitement, but also anxiety about new classes, teachers, or peer relationships. Developing emotional resilience is just as important as physical health. Families can encourage open communication, where children feel safe to share their worries without judgment.



Practicing mindfulness, journaling, or deep breathing exercises can help students cope with stress. Teachers, too, play a role by creating supportive classrooms where every child feels valued. Emotional well-being fosters confidence, motivation, and a positive approach to learning.

#### Cultivating consistent routines

Healthy habits thrive in structured environments. Families can create simple daily routines that balance study, play, chores, and rest. A clear timetable helps children manage responsibilities and reduces last-minute stress.

For example, dedicating a specific hour each evening for homework, followed by relaxation or reading time, makes learning more manageable. Consistency not only helps in forming good habits but also provides a sense of stability and security to students.

#### The role of parents and schools

Building healthy habits is a shared responsibility. Parents set the foundation at home through modeling positive behaviors such as eating well, exercising, and limiting phone use. Schools reinforce these values by offering nutritious cafeteria options, encouraging physical activity, and promoting awareness about mental health. When families and educators work together, children are more likely to adopt habits that last well beyond the school year.

## Quick tips for healthy back-to-school routines

- Sleep First:** Aim for 8–10 hours of sleep every night to stay energized and focused.
- Pack Smart Snacks:** Include fruits, nuts, or yogurt instead of chips and candy.
- Stay Hydrated:** Carry a refillable water bottle to avoid sugary drinks.
- Move More:** Take the stairs, walk between classes, or join a school sports activity.
- Screen Breaks:** Follow the 20-20-20 rule—every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.
- Hygiene Counts:** Wash hands regularly and avoid sharing water bottles or food.
- Morning Boost:** Eat a protein-rich breakfast to fuel concentration throughout the day.
- Balance Study and Play:** Schedule short breaks between homework sessions to refresh your mind.

## TOP EDUCATIONAL APPS

# Language learning, productivity & research tools

From mastering new languages to staying organised and producing top-quality research, these powerful apps are transforming the way students learn and succeed



In today's classrooms, whether physical or virtual, education is no longer limited to chalkboards, textbooks, and hand-written notes. The modern student's toolkit extends into their smartphones, tablets, and laptops, where the right apps can turn studying from a chore into a creative, productive, and even enjoyable experience.

Three categories dominate the digital learning space: language-learning platforms, productivity apps, and research or writing tools. Together, they can help students master new skills, organize their academic lives, and produce high-quality work with greater efficiency.

## Building fluency in the digital age

Mastering a new language once meant poring over vocabulary lists and attending evening classes. Today, innovative apps have transformed the process into a flexible, gamified experience.

One of the most widely recognised leaders in this field is **Duolingo**, famous for its bite-sized lessons, bright visuals, and friendly owl mascot that reminds you to keep up your streak. The app breaks language learning into small, digestible units, allowing students to practice for as little as five to ten minutes a day. By blending repetition, gradual difficulty, and light-hearted challenges, Duolingo manages to make consistent practice an almost addictive habit.

While Duolingo is excellent for beginners and intermediate learners, it is often most effective when paired with conversation-focused apps such as **HelloTalk** or **Tandem**.

These platforms connect learners directly with native speakers, creating an authentic language exchange. Imagine learning Spanish vocabulary on Duolingo during the week and then practicing those phrases in a live chat with someone in Madrid. The instant feedback on pronunciation, grammar, and context can accelerate fluency far more than isolated study.

Other strong contenders include **Memrise** and **Busuu**, which emphasise video-based, real-world dialogues and offer feedback from real language tutors. These tools don't just teach vocabulary—they immerse students in cultural nuance, local idioms, and pronunciation subtleties that textbooks often miss.

The key to success is consistency: even 15 minutes daily can keep the language fresh in the mind, especially if paired with a habit like keeping a personal vocabulary journal or using your device's built-in dictionary feature to save unfamiliar words for later review.

## Productivity tools

Even the most motivated student can feel overwhelmed when assignments, exams, group projects, and extracurricular commitments collide. This is where productivity apps step in as digital personal assistants, helping students plan their weeks, prioritise tasks, and track progress.

Notion has emerged as a favourite among university students for its flexibility and elegance. More than just a note-taking app, Notion allows you to create an entire academic hub in one place.

Students can build dashboards that combine course outlines, assignment calendars, reading logs, and even personal goal trackers. The app's Education Plus plan, free for students with a school email, offers advanced features such as collaborative workspaces, perfect for group assignments or peer study groups. Many students find it useful to create a weekly "command centre" page that displays upcoming deadlines, to-do lists, and a space for daily reflections, making it easier to stay on top of both short-term and long-term academic goals.

For those who prefer a simpler, no-frills task manager, Todoist is a reliable choice. Its intuitive design allows students to enter tasks in natural language ("Submit history essay Friday at 4 p.m."), automatically assigning the correct date and time. With recurring tasks, labels, and productivity charts, Todoist doesn't just track your work, it encourages you to reflect on how you work. Labelling tasks by energy level (for example, "high focus" vs. "low focus") can help students tackle the right kind of work at the right time of day.

On the focus-management side, Forest addresses one of the biggest study challenges in the smartphone era: staying off distracting apps. By starting a study timer, students "plant" a virtual tree that grows over the session; if they leave the app to check social media, the tree withers.

Over time, the result is a forest of productivity, a visual reminder of the hours invested in focused work. Many students combine Forest with the Pomodoro Technique, working in 25-minute sprints followed by short breaks, which keeps concentration levels high without causing burnout.

## Research and writing

In an era of endless online information, the challenge is not finding sources but finding reliable, credible ones—and then organising them effectively.



Google Scholar is often the first stop for serious academic research. Unlike a standard search engine, it focuses exclusively on scholarly articles, books, conference papers, and theses. By filtering results by publication year, setting up keyword alerts, and exploring citation networks ("Cited by"), students can quickly build a reading list of relevant and reputable materials.

Once sources are found, managing them becomes the next hurdle. This is where reference managers such as Zotero and Mendeley shine.

Zotero, a free and open-source tool, allows students to save citations, PDFs, and notes in neatly organised collections. A simple browser extension lets you grab all the bibliographic details from a journal page or library database in one click.

Mendeley offers similar features but adds integrated PDF annotation tools and a Notebook function that aggregates highlights from multiple documents into a single view. Both programs integrate with Microsoft Word and Google Docs, automatically generating citations and bibliographies in the required academic style.

When it comes time to write, clarity and accuracy are just as important as research depth. Grammarly has become a go-to companion for polishing essays, reports, and presentations. Beyond catching typos, it suggests improvements in clarity, tone, and sentence structure. For academic work, its plagiarism detection feature can help ensure all sources are properly credited, although it's important to remember that no automated tool is perfect—manual checking against the relevant style guide remains essential. Grammarly works best when used as a final check rather than a substitute for careful writing and editing.

## Integrating the tools into a routine

While each of these apps can be powerful on its own, the real magic happens when they are used together in a well-structured routine.

A student might start the week by planning assignments and deadlines in Notion, break large tasks into manageable chunks in Todoist, and schedule focused Forest sessions to tackle readings or essays.

For research-heavy projects, Google Scholar becomes the discovery engine, with Zotero or Mendeley managing sources and notes. As deadlines approach, Grammarly helps refine and polish the final submission, ensuring it is both professional and academically sound.

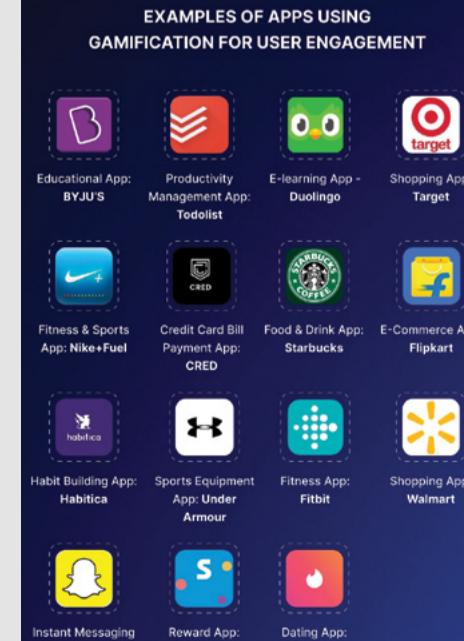
Similarly, language learners can integrate Duolingo or Memrise into a daily 10–15 minute practice session, using Tandem on weekends to speak with a native speaker. By syncing progress across platforms and tracking habits, students can see measurable improvement not just in one subject, but across their entire academic life.

## Ten tips for choosing the right educational app

- Define your goal** – Identify whether you want to improve a language, stay organised, boost productivity, or conduct research. Knowing your primary purpose helps narrow down options.
- Check credibility** – Look for apps from reputable developers, educational institutions, or verified user reviews to ensure accurate and reliable content.
- Match your learning style** – Visual learners may benefit from video-based apps, auditory learners from podcasts or pronunciation tools, and kinesthetic learners from interactive exercises.
- Try free versions first** – Most apps offer free trials or basic versions. Test them before committing to paid subscriptions to see if the format suits you.
- Ease of use** – The app should be intuitive, easy to navigate, and not overloaded with unnecessary features that distract from learning.
- Engagement features** – Look for apps with gamification, streaks, rewards, or interactive
- Device compatibility** – Ensure the app works smoothly on your devices, whether it's a smartphone, tablet, or computer, and syncs progress across platforms.
- Data privacy & security** – Review the app's privacy policy and avoid apps that request unnecessary permissions or share data without consent.
- Check updates & support** – Frequent updates indicate that the app is actively maintained, while good customer support ensures help is available when needed.
- Set a time commitment** – Choose an app that fits your schedule and attention span. Short, daily sessions often work better than long, irregular ones.



exercises that keep you motivated and consistent.



# SKECHERS

## BACK TO SCHOOL



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# Cyber safety for students

As technology continues to shape education and everyday life, cyber safety becomes a cornerstone of student well-being

In today's digital-first world, students spend more time online than ever before—whether for school research, social networking, or simply entertainment. While the internet offers immense opportunities for learning and connecting, it also presents hidden dangers that can affect students' safety, privacy, and even their academic performance.

From phishing scams to cyberbullying, oversharing on social media to falling into the traps of online predators, students must learn to navigate the digital landscape with awareness and responsibility. Cyber safety is no longer optional; it's a life skill that every student must develop to thrive in the 21st century.

## The growing importance of cyber safety

For most students today, being online is second nature. They submit assignments through digital platforms, chat with friends via messaging apps, and use social media to share their lives. However, this dependency also makes them more vulnerable.

A single careless click on a malicious link could expose personal data, while a poorly thought-out social media post could harm one's reputation for years to come. The line between virtual and real life has blurred, and this makes cyber safety not just about technology – it's about protecting one's future.

## Recognizing and avoiding online scams

Scams have evolved far beyond suspicious emails promising lottery winnings. Today, scammers target students through realistic-looking scholarship offers, fake shopping websites, and even impersonation of teachers or school administrators. Phishing attempts may come disguised as urgent messages asking students to reset passwords or confirm account details.

The best defense is awareness. Students should:

- Verify the authenticity of any message before clicking links.
- Avoid sharing financial information or login credentials over email or text.
- Use strong, unique passwords and enable two-factor authentication wherever possible.
- Remember the golden rule: if an offer looks too good to be true, it probably is.

## Safe and smart social media use

Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat have become essential to how students interact and express themselves. But with this visibility comes risk. Oversharing personal details—such as location, school name, or daily routines—can expose students to online harassment, stalking, or exploitation.

Furthermore, what gets posted online often remains accessible for years, even after deletion, potentially affecting college admissions or job opportunities later on.

To use social media safely, students should:

- Adjust privacy settings to limit who can view their profiles.
- Think twice before posting pictures, comments, or personal updates.
- Avoid accepting friend requests or messages from strangers.
- Report and block any suspicious or abusive behavior immediately.

## Dealing with cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has emerged as one of the most pressing issues students face online. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can occur 24/7, leaving victims with no safe space. Negative comments, rumor-spreading, or exclusion from online groups can deeply affect a student's mental health and confidence.

The first step is to recognize cyberbullying and not dismiss it as "harmless." Students should be encouraged to talk openly with parents or teachers if they feel targeted. Screenshots of offensive content should be saved as evidence, and offending users should be blocked or reported. Schools, too, have a responsibility to create awareness campaigns and provide supportive channels for reporting cyberbullying without fear of retaliation.

## Building a culture of digital responsibility

Cyber safety is not just about avoiding threats; it's about building positive digital habits. Students should understand that everything they do online leaves a "digital footprint." Being respectful, honest, and kind online is as important as in real life. Parents and educators can guide students by setting clear rules, having open conversations about internet use, and modeling good digital behavior themselves.

### Practical cyber safety habits for students

- Always log out of school accounts when using shared devices.
- Avoid downloading apps or files from unknown sources.
- Regularly update devices and apps to protect against security vulnerabilities.
- Use reliable antivirus software.
- Remember: not everything online is true – developing critical thinking is part of being safe.



## The role of parents and educators

While students must take responsibility for their online behaviour, parents and educators are equally important in promoting cyber safety. Open conversations about online experiences help create trust, making students more likely to report problems. Workshops, school awareness programs, and parental controls can all contribute to safer digital environments. But perhaps the most powerful tool is awareness—teaching students that the internet, while powerful, must be navigated with care and respect.



## Do's and Don'ts of CYBER SAFETY

### DO'S

- Use strong, unique passwords for each account.
- Enable two-factor authentication wherever possible.
- Think twice before clicking links or downloading files.
- Keep your apps and devices updated.
- Share only necessary information online.

### DON'TS

- Don't accept friend requests from strangers.
- Don't overshare personal details like school, or address.
- Don't fall for offers that sound "too good to be true."
- Don't use public Wi-Fi for banking or sensitive logins.
- Don't ignore privacy settings on social media.

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