



# Braces – for Children and Adults

## • *When should my child start braces?*

*For children as early as age 7, braces or removable orthodontic appliances can be inserted to correct narrow jaws, eliminate teeth crowding or spacing, and interrupt repetitive habits such as thumb sucking and tongue thrusting.*

*Some of the orthodontic appliances are in fact most useful and effective when orthodontic treatment begins before his or her growth spurt.*

## • *Can adults consider braces or is there an alternative?*

*Unless there are existing severe periodontal diseases, adults can wear braces – metal or clear ceramic braces. They work the same way in children and adults by slowly pulling and pushing teeth to new positions through orthodontic wires.*

*Yet, some adult patients may consider less visible braces, such as Invisalign®, for comfort and esthetics.*

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# Finding Balance

New city, new friends, new school, and so much homework! The pressures on kids when they arrive in Shanghai can be immense, but it is possible to ease the transition and help kids adjust to the new life and routines...and avoid overload.

by **May Bizri**

**S**hanghai, like many other cosmopolitan cities around the world is running at a fast pace. Schooling here typically starts as early as children can walk and after-school programs follow soon after. Most children, by the age of five, spend a 9-5 day being taught by an adult at school and after-school program. By age six, homework kicks in, sometimes leaving less than an hour for free-play per day. For many parents coming from typically Western educational backgrounds, that scenario might sound like too much too soon. However, once you're "in the system," you might start to wonder if it's enough, as the expectations on children in Shanghai are usually very high! So how do we strike the right balance between school and play?

## The Right School

The most important step of all is choosing the right system and school for your child, as even the best schools for some may not be the best for our own. When selecting schools, Karlijn de Hoon, Psychomotor therapist at the Essential Learning Group (ELG) urges parents to do their own homework. She says, "Take a closer look at their curriculum, amount of homework expected of children, the school's support system and atmosphere as well as their facilities; then factor in your child's personality, his or her strengths and weaknesses to make the decision whether he or she will thrive in such an environment." That makes for a rather complicated equation, especially when you have more than one child! "This process may seem even more daunting when you are new in town," de Hoon continues, which is why ELG has set up a school selection consultation service where one of their specialists can help parents find the best suited school for their children.

## Good Start

Once you have successfully identified that 'best fit' make sure to take your child along for a visit. Amy Gatesman Quigley, Learning Support Teacher at Western International School of Shanghai (WISS), says, "Having the child interact, learn, and be part of the school for a visit day is a wonderful way to help them transition and adjust to the routines of a new school. A visit day also provides them with a sense of belonging from the very beginning as they may get to make friends and establish a positive rapport with teachers before the first day even happens!"

The first few weeks at a new school can be difficult on even the most resilient children. The adaptation process may be further complicated by a recent move to Shanghai where children feel



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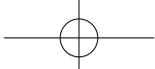
the loss of connection to friends and family back home. These weeks are challenging for the whole family as parents will also be transitioning, but with patience and empathy the difficulties can be successfully overcome. Dr Timothy Kelly, Clinical Psychologist at DeltaWest Clinic explains, “This is a time when it’s really important for parents to ‘be there’ for their children. Spend time with them, hear them out, hang out with them, hug them, tell them what a great job they are doing, and let them know how much you love and care for them.” If you are parent to a teenager, Kelly reminds, “Teens are programmed to say they don’t need parental care anymore, but deep inside they need you more than ever!”

Typically, he adds, “Children and teenagers will adjust within about a month, and may thereafter have a better time in Shanghai than you do! But if adjustment doesn’t occur within three months, and they struggle academically, socially and emotionally, you may want to consider professional help. There are several good therapists in town who can help children and adolescents overcome depression, anxiety and isolation and find how to thrive in Shanghai.” de Hoon recommends taking action ahead of time and signing up your child at a ‘Back to School’ program which accompanies the child during that adaptation period and is designed to help children develop social skills relevant to transitioning to Shanghai, making friends and feeling more at ease in an international school context.

### Homework Struggles

Even the best-suited school may offer challenges such as the inevitable homework, a struggle for many families. Alia Kamhawi, has three children in primary school. The challenge in her case was getting them to start on the homework as they would complain about wanting to play. What has helped channel their energy on homework is giving them a yummy snack and getting them to do a bit of exercise and running around before they get back home. “The minute they walk in they wash up and hit the books...and they now know they’ll have time to play again before bed if they stay focused and get it done without taking breaks,” she explains. Mother of two, Maria Baig, also struggled with tantrums and protests, and stresses the importance of role modeling and involving your child in scheduling decisions. She explains, “What works for us now is to get my computer work done as they do their homework. Together, we’ve come up with a family schedule where we’ve set a time for work.”

Tania Mansfield, Primary Years Program at WISS reminds parents not to forget that homework is never meant to overwhelm or keep the child from ‘being a child’. She says, “In a child-centered curriculum, such as the one we offer, homework and home learning is open-ended, interest driven and designed to meet the learning needs of each student. Homework and home learning are an extension of the classroom and should be a review of the day’s teaching or a ‘hands on’ way to solidify what was learned in class.” If homework becomes a source of stress for your child, make an appointment to talk about it with your child’s teachers.



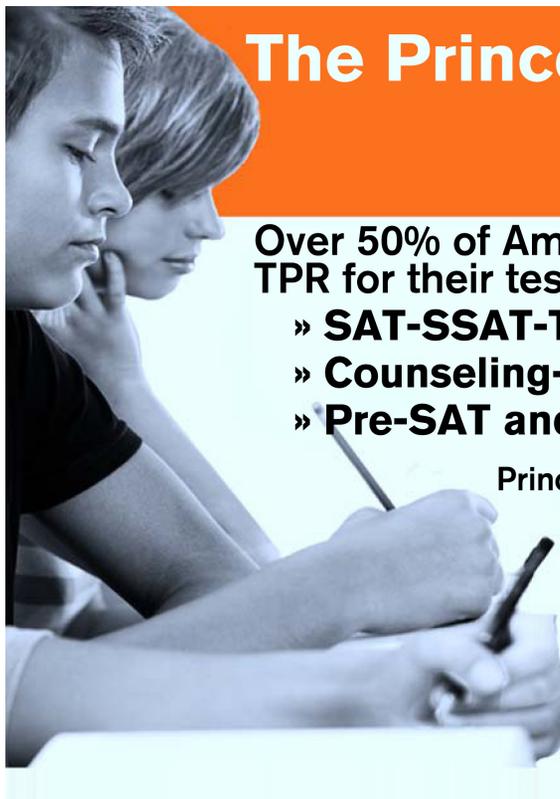
### Importance of Boredom

If you're part of the Shanghai race, you might sometimes find yourself worrying that your children are not being stimulated enough. Julie Mathias, Headmistress at the Happy Kids Kindergarten cautions, "Don't be scared of letting your children 'get bored', this enhances observation and imagination skills as well as creativity, the best ideas and most incredible stories are born in such moments!"

Getting your children 'bored' means turning off all stimulation, including TV, and encouraging them to spend some time on their own every day. "This is as important as any kind of learning and will help them cope with the stress of studying, adapting to new situations and figuring out their place amongst their peers," says Mathias. Such moments of freedom are especially important during times when children are dealing with change and transitions. So when you've chosen the school and the after-school activities make sure to leave some time in your children's schedules for nothing at all!

Most importantly, give your children time and support to make their adjustments to any new routines, and don't hesitate to ask your school or other professionals for help if you need it. 

*May Bizri is founder of FamilyGuru, a non-profit organization bringing specialists and parents together to offer guidance on everyday parenting challenges. Contact [info@familyguru.org](mailto:info@familyguru.org)*



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