



United Way of Greater Houston

DO IT YOURSELF!

ELEMENTARY

BACK-TO-SCHOOL PACK



Each year at back to school time, it can be a struggle for many families to acquire all the school supplies and new clothes that their children need to be successful in school. A Back to School pack will provide many of the school supply essentials and help these students and families prepare for the new year.

SUPPLY LIST

Approximate cost per kit is **\$13-\$60**, depending on current vendor options, prices, and items selected.

While each school can have custom school supply lists by grade level, this list of supplies includes the essential items requested by most teachers. It is recommended to include as many of these items as possible.

PAPER - WIDE RULE, LOOSE LEAF

one ream per pack

PENCILS

one box per pack

Include 10-15 pencils. If you buy in bulk, be sure to add a small pencil pouch for storage as well.

FOLDERS

two per pack

GLUE STICKS AND/OR WASHABLE SCHOOL GLUE

two per pack

LARGE ZIPLOC BAG, DRAWSTRING BAG, OR CLEAR/MESH BACKPACK

Depending on your budget, you can place all the supplies in a large plastic storage bag, drawstring bag, or a backpack. Many schools require clear backpacks, so we recommend purchasing mesh backpacks if you are able. Mesh backpacks meet school standards and tend to last longer than clear plastic backpacks

HANDWRITTEN LETTER OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR STUDENT

You can use plain paper, craft paper, or a United Way letter template

NOTEBOOKS - WIDE RULE

two per pack

CRAYONS/MARKERS

one box per pack

Recommend 24-pack of crayons (minimum) and/or 10-pack of markers (minimum)

HEADPHONES W/ MICROPHONE

one per pack

SCISSORS - 5" BLUNT TIP

one per pack

VENDOR AND SUPPLY OPTIONS

School supplies can be found at a variety of online and in-person stores. Prices can vary widely throughout the year and at different stores. Below is a list of vendors ideas:

- [Amazon Wishlist](#) of recommended supplies
- **Office supply provider:** you be able to buy some of these items in bulk from your regular office supplier
- **Walmart or Target**, especially during summer months using Back to School sales

One way to engage your coworkers in the project and decrease the overall cost of project supplies is to encourage people to buy one or more of the items on the list to use for the project. This can be a meaningful way for volunteers to involve their families and allow people who are unable to attend the packing session to participate. If you do host a school supply drive leading up to the project, it's helpful to know that the incoming supplies can be hard to estimate ahead of time. You may receive more markers than you need and no folders. You may need to supplement collected donations to offset low participation or missing items. There are also times when your colleagues will exceed your expectations. Be prepared for either situation.

PROJECT TIPS

- Clean and prepare your project space.

United Way advises all volunteers to abide by the [CDC health and safety guidelines](#) when shopping for, preparing your select projects, and delivering completed kits to agencies. Here are some specific guidelines for how to participate in Days of Caring safely

- **Days of Caring Safety:**

- Please wash your hands before starting to prepare the volunteer project(s) and ensure your workspace and all materials have been disinfected.
- Use online ordering for supplies (shopping lists provided) or use social distancing while shopping for project supplies.
- When delivering your completed kits to an agency, wear a mask and follow the listed instructions. Each agency has procedures in place to ensure their safety and yours

- **Estimated time per kit**

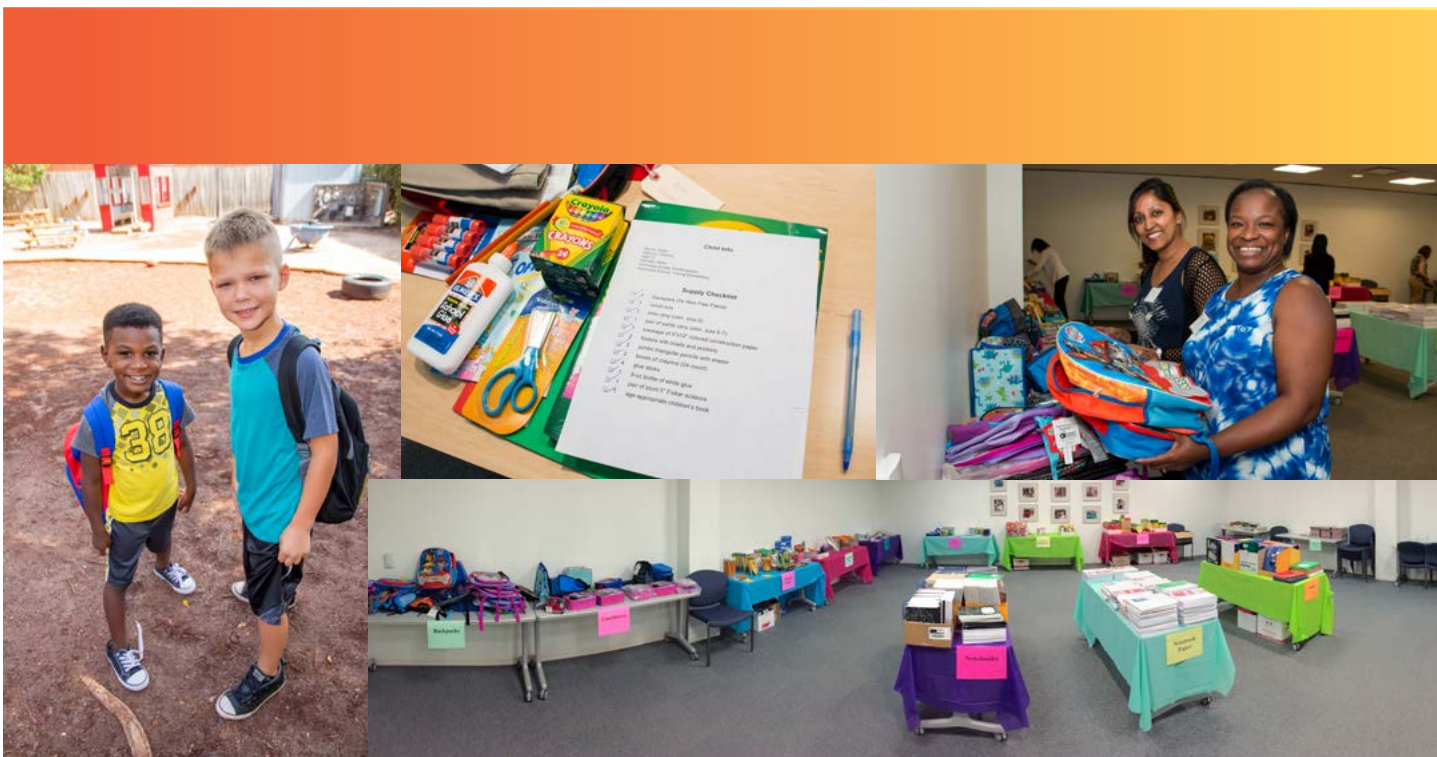
Each kit takes approximately 10-15 minutes to assemble including the handwritten letter.

- **Set up tips**

You will want to collect and count all the supplies a couple days before the project, if possible. This allows you to make sure you have enough of each item before the project day. You can set up the items in an assembly line to make it easier to assemble the kits. We also recommend placing a sign in front of each item that indicates how many of the item should go in the pack; for example, two folders, one pack of crayons, ten pencils, etc.

- **United Way letter of encouragement**

This is the part of the project that will take the most time for volunteers and personalize the project for the recipient student and family. Encourage volunteers to write at least six to eight (6-8) sentences in their letter. Volunteers can share their favorite memory from elementary school, advice for the next year, and/or words of encouragement. You may also use [this template](#) for your letter if you like.



When your Back-to-School kits are complete, United Way staff will work with you to coordinate delivery of the kits to a community partner. This may require someone from your organization dropping off the completed kits at a mutually agreed upon time.

Questions or issues? Contact your United Way representative or the Volunteer Engagement Team at DaysofCaring@unitedwayhouston.org.