

Building Reading Skills



Information for Parents

A strong foundation in reading will help set your kindergartener up for success in elementary school—and beyond. As your child works on these skills in school, there are a number of things you can do at home to help further develop your child's reading skills.

Kindergarten Reading Overview

Kindergarteners spend a good deal of time developing the skills they need to learn to read. Here are some of the skills kindergarteners typically work on.

- ▶ recognizing all the letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds
- ▶ reading words and short sentences
- ▶ being able to retell a story after listening to it
- ▶ recognizing and using rhyming words
- ▶ quickly recognizing *sight words* (words that appear frequently in books for new readers)

Kindergarteners have a wide range of reading skills, and their skills develop at varying rates. At this age, learning should be fun—and children should always feel good about what they are able to do.



For more about reading with your child, watch this video.

Support New Skills

Read to your child every day.

Reading aloud to your kindergartener is the best thing you can do to help build your child's reading skills.

Talk about letter sounds.

Practice the sound each letter makes and point out letter sounds in names, places, and things.

"That word starts with the same sound as your name. Can you think of other words that start with that sound?"

Teach sight words.

Help your child learn sight words. Look for these common words in everyday situations and in the books you read.

a	can	here	like	on	to
am	come	I	look	see	up
an	do	in	me	so	we
and	go	is	my	the	went
at	he	it	no	this	you

Make Reading a Priority

- ▶ Develop a reading routine, and read to your child every day.
- ▶ Regularly go to the library to get new books.
- ▶ Give books as gifts for birthdays and other occasions.
- ▶ Ask questions while reading, such as, *"What do you think will happen next?"* and *"What would you do?"*
- ▶ Read the same favorite books over and over.
- ▶ Be a good role model. Read newspapers, books, and magazines for information and pleasure, and talk about what you've read.

Building Writing Skills



Information for Parents

Children spend a good deal of time in kindergarten learning how to write letters and words. As your kindergartener works on their writing skills in school, there are a number of things you can do at home to help further develop your child's skills.

Kindergarten Writing Overview

Kindergarteners start the year writing individual letters and progress to writing whole words and sentences. Here are some of the writing skills your kindergartener will be working on this year.

- ▶ gripping writing tools correctly and steadying the paper with the other hand
- ▶ writing from left to right and top to bottom
- ▶ forming upper and lowercase letters correctly
- ▶ printing numbers and their own first and last name
- ▶ correctly writing simple words, such as *cat*

Kindergarteners have a wide range of writing skills, and their skills develop at varying rates. At this age, learning should be playful and fun. Be encouraging and praise all of your child's writing efforts.



VIDEO

For more kindergarten success tips, watch this video.

Build Strength and Skills

Young children need strong hand muscles to hold a pencil correctly, and small motor skills to be able to use a pencil to write.

Strengthen hand muscles

- ▶ Provide playdough or clay for your child to squeeze, pull, and manipulate into shapes.
- ▶ Wad newspaper up into balls and have fun throwing them into a wastebasket.

Develop small motor skills

- ▶ Help your child put a puzzle together, string beads, and build with blocks.
- ▶ Let your child cut up colored paper and magazines using child-safe scissors.
- ▶ Demonstrate the proper way to hold a pencil and steady the paper. Encourage your child to practice writing properly.

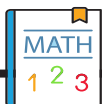
Make Writing Fun

Have paper, pencils, and markers readily available, and look for ways to practice writing that are fun. Here are just a few ideas.

- ▶ Use sidewalk chalk to write words on the driveway or sidewalk.
- ▶ Put salt or sugar on a cookie sheet and write letters and numbers with your finger.
- ▶ Have a whiteboard or chalkboard available to practice writing letters and words.
- ▶ Help your child create thank you notes and birthday cards.

If you ever have concerns about your child's progress, or if you are looking for additional ways to help build writing skills at home, talk to your child's teacher.

Building Math Skills



Information for Parents

As kindergarteners develop their budding math skills, they need their parents support and involvement. The information here will help you help your child develop basic math skills—and also have fun.

Kindergarten Math Overview

In kindergarten, children learn about numbers, counting, grouping, and sorting. Here are some of the specific skills your child is likely to work on this year.

- ▶ counting to 100
- ▶ writing numbers up to 20
- ▶ identifying and creating shapes
- ▶ counting objects and answering “how many” questions
- ▶ understanding relative terms, such as *more*, *less*, *smaller*, *bigger*, *heavier*, and *lighter*
- ▶ solving simple addition and subtraction problems

Math skills build on each other, which is why students need to master one skill before going on to the next. This is also why it's so important for young students to develop a strong math foundation.



VIDEO

For more kindergarten success tips, watch this video.

Practice Math Every Day

Increase your kindergartener's interest in math by showing how important numbers are in our daily lives, and by providing your child with fun opportunities to practice their math skills.

- ▶ Ask your child to bring you a specific number of objects, such as four spoons or five cups
- ▶ Practice grouping and sorting items. Have your child sort Legos or blocks by color and shape, or put coins into categories (pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters).
- ▶ Play board games that require moving a number of spaces, and card games that involve numbers, such as "Go Fish."

Make Math Fun

Be creative. Look for fun and interesting ways to practice math every day. Here are just a few ideas.

- ▶ As you drive around town, point out the numbers you see on buildings, billboards, and road signs.
- ▶ Count everything. Have your child count the carrots on their plate or the coins in your wallet. Before eating a bag of M&Ms, count how many there are of each color.
- ▶ Take part in games that require counting or scoring, such as basketball.
- ▶ Relate numbers to things that are important in your child's life. For example, use a calendar to count the days until a special event or have a chart measuring your child's height and/or weight.

Building Social Skills



Information for Parents

Some children are social butterflies; others are quiet and reserved. For all children, kindergarten is a new adventure, and it usually takes a little while for most to feel comfortable in this new environment. Here you will find information on how you can support your child's budding social skills.

Kindergarten Social Skills Overview

In kindergarten, children are sharpening their listening and speaking skills, making friends, and becoming more independent. Here are some social skills your child may be working on this year.

- ▶ sharing and taking turns
- ▶ listening to others without interrupting
- ▶ following rules
- ▶ verbalizing wants and needs
- ▶ understanding the difference between right and wrong
- ▶ making decisions independently

Be a good role model. If your child sees you valuing friendships and treating others with respect, they are likely to do the same.



VIDEO

For more on
friendship,
check out this
quick video.

Encourage Socialization

Friendships become more important in kindergarten. During this time, children need support as they learn to build relationships outside of their family.

- ▶ Get to know the other kindergarten parents and set up play dates with your child's classmates.
- ▶ To help your child feel at ease in unfamiliar situations, provide opportunities for them to experience different places and people.
- ▶ Encourage your child to use words to let others know what they need or want.
- ▶ Play games. Games help children learn how to take turns, follow the rules, and win and lose.
- ▶ Praise your child when you see them using good social skills.

Build Independence

Kindergarteners are expected to do more on their own. Provide your child with choices and give them age-appropriate responsibilities.

- ▶ Give your child simple household tasks and make sure they are completed. Young children must learn to finish what they start.
- ▶ Help your child develop decision-making skills by giving them choices. Let your child choose which shirt to wear, what to eat for lunch, or which game to play
- ▶ When your child is struggling, don't immediately swoop in to help. Let your child try to problem solve—and then celebrate their success.

Building Motor Skills



Information for Parents

Kindergarteners are on the go. They are able to do more physically, and their fine motor skills are improving. The following is a short breakdown of the motor skills your kindergartener is working on—and what you can do to help.

Kindergarten Motor Skills Overview

Gross motor skills involve movement of the muscles in the arms, legs, and torso.

Examples of gross motor skills include:

- ▶ catching a ball with two hands
- ▶ running, skipping, and jumping forward
- ▶ standing on one foot

Fine motor skills involve movement of the muscles in the hands and fingers.

Examples of fine motor skills include:

- ▶ holding and using writing tools correctly
- ▶ tracing lines and basic shapes
- ▶ cutting a straight line with scissors

Remember, children develop at different rates and there is a wide range of what's considered "normal" at this age.



VIDEO

For more
kindergarten
success tips,
watch this video.

Build Gross Motor Skills

Large motor skills are needed for playing games, sports, and other physical activities. Large motor skills also help build stamina for academic tasks. Here are some ways to help build these skills.

- ▶ Play catch in the backyard.
- ▶ Practice jumping rope or hula hooping.
- ▶ Play hopscotch in the driveway.
- ▶ Have fun running, skipping, and hopping.
- ▶ Put on some music and have a dance party.
- ▶ Play games like Twister and Simon Says.
- ▶ Practice lifting a knee and touching it with the opposite hand.
- ▶ Do jumping jacks.

Build Fine Motor Skills

Small motor skills are needed to perform a variety of kindergarten “desk activities.” Developing these skills will help your child be a better student and enjoy school more.

- ▶ To encourage drawing and writing, always have paper and writing utensils available.
- ▶ Provide playdough or clay to develop hand muscles.
- ▶ Help your child put a puzzle together or string beads.
- ▶ Get a pair of child-safe scissors and let your child cut up colored paper and magazines.
- ▶ Build a house out of playing cards together.
- ▶ Have your child help with household chores such as folding napkins or brushing a pet.

Building Life Skills



Information for Parents

In kindergarten, children are expected to be able to take care of more things on their own. By teaching your child some basic life skills, you can help your little one be more independent and confident—and more successful in kindergarten.

Kindergarten Life Skills Overview

Young children become more self-sufficient by doing things for themselves, having more responsibilities, and making choices. Here are some skills your kindergartener will work on this year.

- ▶ drinking from a cup and using utensils
- ▶ using the restroom and washing hands
- ▶ using zippers, snaps, and buttons
- ▶ following simple directions
- ▶ taking care of their belongings, and respecting the property of others
- ▶ making decisions independently

As children take on new challenges, it's important for parents to show they have faith in their child's abilities—but to also be available to help if needed.



VIDEO

For more on
teaching
responsibility,
watch this video.

Teach Self-Care Skills

Kindergarten teachers can't assist every child with every need. Teachers need students to be able to take care of certain things on their own. Here's how you can help.

Eating meals and snacks

Teach your child the proper way to hold utensils, how to open a juice box, use a napkin, and tidy up the area when they're finished eating.

Getting dressed

It may take a bit longer for your kindergartener to get dressed without your help, but that's how they are going to learn.

Personal hygiene

Kindergarteners need to know how to wash their face and hands, brush their teeth, and use the restroom on their own.

Have Rules and Routines

Help your child become more independent and confident by providing a home where there's not only love, but also rules and routines.

- ▶ Rules are important because they provide boundaries for children. We all feel more comfortable when we know what we can and can't do.
- ▶ Routines empower and comfort young children. When they have routines to follow, they know exactly what they have to do and when they have to do it.

When children have rules and routines at home, the day runs more smoothly—and children are also better able to adapt to the rules at school.