

Getting Your Child Ready for

KINDERGARTEN





Dear Parents,

Kindergarten is a time of growth and learning, and preparation for this important year all starts with you. With every story you read, skill you teach, or hug you give, know that you are the most valuable teacher your child will ever have.

This book walks you through the skills that are developed in kindergarten—and it shows how you can help your child get ready for this exciting year.

Enjoy this special time!

Getting Your Child READY FOR KINDERGARTEN

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INTRODUCTION

Kindergarten is the beginning of a child's formal education, and it's important that your child have a positive kindergarten experience.

This book goes over the skills teachers would like children to have when they start kindergarten. It also gives you a number of simple things you can do to help your child get ready for kindergarten.

Knowing letters and numbers are important skills, but as you will see, there are many other skills that contribute to a successful kindergarten year.

As you help your preschooler prepare for kindergarten, try to make learning fun. Encourage curiosity and imagination, and answer those endless questions.



Children develop at different rates, and there is a wide range of what "normal" looks like at this age. Schools recognize that children entering kindergarten have different skill levels, and kindergarten teachers are prepared to work with children with a wide variety of skills and learning styles.

Beginning KINDERGARTEN SKILLS

While beginning kindergarteners have varying levels of readiness, children entering kindergarten are generally expected to be able to do most of the things listed below.

General Knowledge

- Say their name and address
- Identify some numbers and letters of the alphabet
- Retell a familiar event or story
- Identify basic shapes, such as a star, circle, and square
- Recite some simple rhymes
- Match objects (socks, shoes, mittens)
- Notice similarities and differences in objects
- Count to 10

Motor Skills

- Throw and catch a large ball
- Walk backwards, hop, skip, and jump
- Write their first name and draw basic shapes
- Cut on a line with scissors

Social Skills

- Speak in full sentences
- Share with others
- Follow simple instructions
- Make choices
- Take turns
- Show concern for others
- Listen attentively to a story



Take time to help your child develop these important skills!

Kindergarten READINESS

The following pages provide a number of ideas to help you prepare your child for kindergarten.

Readiness Skills Reading and Writing

Letters and Beginning Sounds

Look for opportunities to show your child that letters and words are all around us.

- At breakfast, ask your child to find specific letters on a cereal box.
- Spell simple words with refrigerator magnets.
- Pick a letter, talk about the sound that letter makes, and see how many things you can find around the house that begin with that letter's sound.
- When you're riding in the car or taking a walk, play a rhyming word game. *"I see a cat. Can you think of a word that rhymes with cat?"*
- Sing the alphabet song.
- Read an ABC picture book and practice the sound each letter makes.



Reading

One of the greatest gifts parents can give their child is a love of reading. Read to your child every day.

- As you read, move your finger under the words to help your child learn that words go from left to right.
- Regularly visit the library and check out books to read. (Dr. Seuss books are great for this age.)
- Read the same favorite books over and over.
- Ask questions while reading, such as, “What do you think will happen next?” and “What would you do?”

Vocabulary Explosion

Preschoolers learn vocabulary at the rate of five to six words per day. Words such as “Stegosaurus” are not only fun for children to say, they also help children learn to distinguish sounds.

Visit the library, check out books on subjects your child is interested in, and help your child learn new vocabulary.

Writing

Kindergarteners spend a good deal of time in school learning to write.

- Help your child practice writing letters and numbers.
- Have paper, pencils, and crayons readily available for writing and drawing.
- Teach your child how to write their name with the first letter capitalized, and the rest in lowercase.

Readiness Skills

Numbers, Shapes, and Colors

Numbers

Help develop your child's math skills by looking for opportunities to count and talk about numbers.

- Count items aloud throughout the day. For example, count how many socks you take out of the dryer, or how many eggs are in the egg carton.
- As you drive around town, point out the numbers you see on buildings, billboards, and street signs.
- Ask your child to bring you a specific number of objects, such as four spoons or five cups.
- Play card games such as "Go Fish."
- Introduce the concept of time. *"We're going to start making dinner at 5:00, and then we'll eat at 6:00."*

Shapes and Colors

Knowing shapes and colors will help your child understand that objects can be placed into categories.

- Play a game in which your child tries to find objects of a particular color or shape around the house.
- Take a walk and ask your child to point out the similarities and differences in objects. *"Look at these two flowers. What's different about them?"*
- Match socks or put coins into categories (pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters).
- Sort Legos or blocks by shape or color.



Readiness Skills

Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Children need fine motor skills to color, paint, write, cut, paste, and draw—activities that kindergarteners do every day.

- To encourage drawing and writing, always have paper, crayons, markers, and colored pencils available.
- Provide playdough or clay to develop hand muscles.
- Let your child cut up colored paper and magazines with a pair of child-safe scissors.
- Help your child string beads, build with blocks, and put puzzles together.
- Practice zipping and unzipping jackets, buttoning and unbuttoning sweaters and shirts, and fastening snaps.



Large Motor Skills

Children need large motor skills for playing games, sports, and other physical activities.

- Play catch. Do somersaults.
- Jump rope. Practice running, skipping, and hopping.
- Kick a soccer ball back and forth. Bounce a basketball.

Your Future Superstar

Some kids seem to be good athletes, even at a young age. Give your child opportunities to develop their skills—but keep in mind that trying to do something before a child is ready can lead to frustration.

Readiness Skills

Social Interactions

Speaking and Listening Skills

Good communication skills will help lead to success in kindergarten and beyond.

- Encourage your child to share their thoughts and ideas with you. Ask questions that require more than yes or no answers.
- Visit new places and talk about what you're seeing and doing. Make every outing an opportunity for learning new vocabulary.
- Ask your child to tell you about what they did that day.
- Read stories to your child, and as you read, ask questions to help sharpen their listening skills.
- Give your child two- or three-step directions to follow, and then ask your child to repeat them back to you. For example, *"Wash your face, brush your teeth, and choose a book for us to read."*

Social Skills

Kindergarten opens up a whole new world of social interactions.

- Provide opportunities for your child to play with other children.
- Encourage your child to use words to let others know what they want.
- Play games. Games help children learn how to take turns, follow directions—and how to win and lose.



Readiness Skills

Personal Responsibility

Developing personal responsibility is an important step in getting ready for kindergarten.

It might be quicker for you to zip up your child's jacket, but taking a few extra minutes to teach self-help skills will lead to kindergarten success—and build self-confidence.

Things to Practice

Teachers would like children entering kindergarten to be able to do the following:

- Get their jacket on and off without help.
- Use the restroom and wash their hands.
- Cover their mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- Drink from a cup and open a juice box.
- Operate zippers, snaps, and buttons.
- Properly use eating utensils.
- Clean up after themselves.



Shopping Guide

You can help your child develop personal responsibility by shopping wisely for school clothes and supplies.

- Make sure zippers, buttons, and fasteners are easy to manage.
- Since tying shoes is a skill that often doesn't come until first grade, consider buying shoes with Velcro fasteners.
- If you purchase a backpack, make sure it's not too large, and that it can be put on without help.

Getting Ready for THE FIRST DAY

You've done all that you can to help your child get ready for kindergarten—congratulations!

The following tips and advice will help ensure that your child's first day of kindergarten goes smoothly.

- Take advantage of opportunities for your child to become familiar with the school, meet their teacher, and visit the classroom.
- Explain what your child can expect to happen. Answer questions about kindergarten simply and honestly.
- Make sure your child understands how they will get to school, and what will happen when school is over. If your child rides a bus, make sure your kindergartener knows their bus number.

On that first day, be sure to take a picture of your child to remember this special day!

Children take cues from their parents. As you get ready for the first day, be calm, and let your child know that you are confident they will have a wonderful day.



READY, SET, GO CHECKLIST



I am ready to go to kindergarten!

A checklist from your child's point of view.

- I visited my new school and I know where my classroom is.
- I know how I'm going to get to school and what will happen when school is over.
- I know my parents' names and my home address.
- I can use the restroom and wash my hands by myself.
- I can get my jacket on and off without any help.

Advice from a Kindergarten Teacher

"Read to your child every day. As you read, talk about the pictures and the characters, and every few pages, ask questions about what you've read."

"Look for ways to turn everyday activities into learning experiences. For example, use grocery store outings as a way to practice letter and number recognition."

"Most importantly, enjoy your child, and make learning fun!"



Kindergarten SUCCESS

The following guidelines will help ensure that your child has a great year in kindergarten.

Work with your school

- Get to know your child's teacher. Don't hesitate to ask questions or share your concerns.
- Attend all parent programs and conferences.

Promote active learning

- Make reading a daily family activity.
- Look for ways to broaden your child's horizons. Visit a museum or aquarium. Go to a concert, sporting event, or theater production.
- Continue to help your kindergartener learn letters, numbers, colors, and shapes.



Build healthy habits

- Have healthy food at home, and make sure that your child gets regular exercise and 9-12 hours of sleep.

Develop routines

- Develop good nighttime and morning routines. Have a regular bedtime, and a morning routine that includes a healthy breakfast.
- Keep after-school hours simple. Don't overschedule sports, lessons, or other activities.

Encourage socialization

- Get to know the other kindergarten parents, and arrange play dates with your child's classmates.
- To help your child feel at ease in new situations, provide opportunities for them to experience different places, people, and activities.

Promote individual interests

- While group activities are important, it's also important for children to have activities that can be done alone, such as painting or playing with Legos, dolls, or action figures.



Limit screen time

- Place a limit on TV, video games, and computer time.

Be interested and enthusiastic

- Talk to your child about what happened at school each day, and be interested in what they are learning.
- Ask specific questions, such as *"Who did you play with today?"* *"What did you have for a snack?"*
- Show pride in your kindergartener's accomplishments and display samples of their artwork and writing.

An Exciting Year!

This will be a year of big changes. As a kindergartener, your child will learn some of the basic skills needed to read, write, and do math. Your child will also learn how to follow classroom rules and get along with others.

As your kindergartener grows and develops new skills, your child will become more independent and self-confident. It will be a year of tremendous growth!

Getting Your Child Ready for **KINDERGARTEN**

This tip-filled booklet makes the process of getting your child ready for kindergarten simple, stress-free, and fun!

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