

# KINDERGARTEN

## Parent Guidebook



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# Dear Parent

Kindergarten is an exciting time for your child. During this year, your child will become accustomed to the routine of school, develop new skills, and make new friends. Your child will also become more independent and self-sufficient. This will be a year of tremendous growth!

As a parent, there is a great deal you can do to help your child succeed in school. Read on to learn how you can support your kindergartener during this very important year.



We know that many children are being raised by grandparents or guardians. For the sake of simplicity, the term “parent” refers to any primary caregiver.

# Kindergarten Parent Guidebook

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# Introduction

In kindergarten, students develop the basic skills needed to read, write, and do math—and with each passing month, kindergarteners become more confident, responsible, and independent learners. As you watch your child’s knowledge and skills increase, know that your guidance and support are key to your child’s success.

This book walks you through the ways your child will learn and grow this year—physically, intellectually, and socially. It will also discuss what your kindergartener might learn in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. Most importantly, this book provides a number of simple things you can do at home to help your child have a successful year.



**Let's make this a great year!**

## Children develop at different rates

There is a wide range of what “normal” looks like at this age. Schools recognize that kindergarteners have varying skill levels, and kindergarten teachers are prepared to work with students with an array of skills and learning preferences.

# Growing Up: Kindergarten

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## Physical Development

As the year goes on, kindergarteners improve their large motor skills (e.g., running, skipping, and kicking a ball) and their fine motor skills (e.g., holding a pencil properly and using scissors).

To help your child improve large motor skills, do fun physical activities together, such as dancing, swimming, and playing catch. To help develop fine motor skills, put together puzzles, do art projects, and encourage your child to practice buttoning and zipping his/her own clothes.

## Intellectual Development

Your child is becoming more and more curious about the world, and is likely to ask lots of questions, especially, “Why?” Be open to your child’s questions and look for ways to encourage his/her curiosity. Go on nature walks and take trips to museums and zoos—and if you ever feel overwhelmed by endless “Why” questions, respond with another question, such as, “What do you think?” or “Why do you think that is?”

## Social Development

Kindergarteners have very different levels of social skills. Some children are social butterflies. Others are quiet and reserved. For all children, kindergarten is a new adventure, so it may take a while for your child to feel comfortable in this new environment.

To help your kindergartener develop socially, provide opportunities for your child to play with other children (e.g., play dates) and learn positive social behaviors (e.g., taking turns and sharing). Also, help your child improve his/her speaking and listening skills.

# Kindergarten Academics

Kindergarten academics vary depending on the school; however, there are certain skills you can expect your child to work on this year.



## Reading

It's very important for all students to have a strong foundation in reading, and in kindergarten, children spend a good deal of time developing the skills they need to read.

Here are some of the reading skills kindergarteners generally 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 the following "sight words"  
(These words appear frequently in books for beginning readers.)

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

To help your child learn sight words, write each word on an index card. Start by focusing on just a few words, and add new words as you go. Also look for these words in the books you read together. *Be sure to keep the learning fun!*

**One of the greatest gifts you can give your kindergartener is a love of reading. Here are some things you can do at home to encourage your child's interest in reading.**

## **Read aloud to your child every day**

Reading together expands vocabulary, stimulates the imagination, and teaches children to listen. It also nurtures a special bond between you and your child.

While reading a story, ask your child questions such as, "What do you think will happen next?" "What would you do?" and "How do you think he felt?"



## **Talk about letter sounds**

Read an ABC picture book and practice the sound each letter makes. Point out letter sounds in names, places, and things. Discuss their similarities and differences. "That word starts with the same sound as your name. Can you think of any other words that start with that sound?"

## **Look for words in everyday life**

Throughout the day (while watching TV, playing games, running errands, shopping), point out words your child might know. When driving, look for familiar words on street signs, store fronts, and billboards.

## **Make reading important in your home**

- ▶ Give books as gifts for birthdays and other occasions.
- ▶ Designate a special place in your home to store your child's books.
- ▶ Regularly go to the library and pick out new books. Also look for age-appropriate magazines such as *Highlights for Children* and *Zoobooks*.
- ▶ Develop a reading routine, such as designating a "reading time" or reading a bedtime story to your child each night.
- ▶ Be a good role model. Read newspapers, books, and magazines for information and pleasure, and talk about what you've read.

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# Writing

Kindergarteners make tremendous strides in writing. Your child will start the year writing individual letters and will progress to writing whole words and short sentences.

As your child works on his/her writing skills in school, there are a number of things you can do at home to further develop these skills.

## **Show your child that writing is an important part of our everyday lives, and that there is a purpose to writing.**

- ▶ Help your child write a thank you note for a gift, or a get well note to a sick friend.
- ▶ Hang a chalkboard in your home and encourage your child to write letters and words on it.
- ▶ Have your child make and sign birthday and greeting cards.
- ▶ Ask your child to write his/her name on art work and help add a title such as "My Family." Proudly display the artwork for all to enjoy.
- ▶ Let your child dictate a letter to a loved one. As his/her skills develop, have your child write part of the letter.

*Be encouraging, and praise all of your child's writing efforts.*

## **Make writing fun!**

**Be creative. Look for fun and interesting ways to practice writing. Here are just a few ideas.**

- ▶ Give your child letters and numbers to trace.
- ▶ Use sidewalk chalk to practice writing words on the driveway or sidewalk.
- ▶ Write letters or words on steamy windows.
- ▶ Put salt or sugar on a cookie sheet and practice writing letters and numbers with your finger.
- ▶ Play a guessing game by making "air" letters.
- ▶ Have fun using finger paint to practice writing letters.





## Math

In kindergarten, children learn about numbers, counting, sorting, and grouping. By the end of the year, kindergarteners typically are expected to be able to count to 100, write numbers up to 20, and give you the “next number” for numbers 1 to 100.

Here are some tips for building your child’s math skills this year:

- ▶ Ask your child to bring you a specific number of objects, such as four spoons or five cups.
- ▶ Look for opportunities to use “relative” terms, such as more, less, bigger, smaller, taller, shorter, heavier, lighter.
- ▶ Practice grouping and sorting items. For example, have your child sort Legos or blocks by color and shape, or put coins into categories (pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters).
- ▶ Play games that require counting or scoring (e.g., throwing balls into a basket), board games that require moving a number of spaces, and card games such as “Go Fish.”
- ▶ Relate numbers to things important in your child’s life. Use the bathroom scale to measure your child’s weight, and make a chart showing your child’s height. Also, use a calendar to count the days until a special event. *“Let’s count how many days there are until your birthday.”*

## Learn the lingo

**Manipulatives** include items such as colorful beads, counters, cubes, and tiles. Ideal for children who learn by touch or doing, manipulatives are often used to teach math concepts. They also help young learners develop fine motor skills.

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## Science

In science, kindergarteners learn about the world and how it works. They do small experiments and learn about the physical properties of objects (e.g., which objects are attracted to a magnet). Kindergarteners also learn about the weather, plants, animal habitats, and much more. Look for ways to encourage your child's curiosity and interest in science.

- ▶ Conduct small experiments. For instance, during bath time, have your child predict whether certain bath toys will float or sink, and discuss why he/she thinks that happens.
- ▶ Go for walks and observe the clouds in the sky. Talk about how some clouds look different than others.
- ▶ Help your child collect leaves, and have him/her draw pictures of the different shapes and colors of the leaves you find.



## Social Studies

In social studies, children learn about families, communities, and individuals, including how they're different and similar.

- ▶ Talk to your child about your family and who it includes (e.g., grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles), as well as how these family members relate to each other ("Your aunt is mommy's sister.")
- ▶ Talk to your child about neighborhoods, cities, states, countries, and continents, starting with your neighborhood. Point out government buildings, such as the fire station, police station, and library.
- ▶ Discuss different kinds of rules and responsibilities, such as speed limits and household chores. Have your child explain some classroom rules as well.



## Work with Your Child's School

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Support and work with the teachers and the principal at your school. Like you, they want your child to enjoy school and have a successful year.

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**Stay informed. Attend all parent programs, meetings, and parent-teacher conferences. Also, regularly check your school's website for news and updates.**

- ▶ By your words and actions, show your child that doing well in school and getting a good education are important.
- ▶ Make sure your student is in school every day, and insist that your child follow the school rules and treat everyone with respect.
- ▶ Make the most of parent-teacher conferences. Before each conference, make a list of the information you want to share, along with any questions or concerns you may have.

## Talk to your child's teacher

If you have concerns about your child's progress, or if your child is having any problems with school, be sure to talk to your child's teacher.

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# Help Your Child Succeed

Now is the time to help your child develop habits that will promote success this year, and in the years to come. Here's what you can do.



## Develop routines

Routines for sleep, meals, chores, and play provide stability for young learners. What might seem like a simple routine to you may be a source of comfort and accomplishment to your child. Sticking to routines at home will also help your child get better at following routines at school.

Establish morning and nighttime routines that include getting to bed early enough to get the recommended 10-11 hours of sleep.

**Make choosing clothes for the next day a part of your child's bedtime routine. It will give your child a sense of control—and make your mornings run more smoothly.**

## Be interested and enthusiastic

Talk to your child about what happened at school each day, and be interested in what he/she is learning. Ask specific questions about your child's day, such as, *"Who did you play with at recess today?"*

Always show pride in your kindergartener's accomplishments, and display samples of his/her artwork and writing.

## Promote active learning

Active learning is learning that engages the student in the learning process (e.g., exploring personal interests, asking and answering questions). Examples of active learning activities include participating in team sports, visiting museums, and playing a musical instrument.

Here are a few ways you can promote active learning at home.

- ▶ Spend time listening and talking to your child, and involve your child in family discussions.
- ▶ Play games, involve your child in projects, and turn daily activities (e.g., meal preparation) into learning experiences.
- ▶ Have discussions and ask for your child's thoughts and opinions on books, movies, games, and TV shows.

Active learning activities will help your child develop and grow, and be more successful in school.

## Teach your child basic life skills

By teaching your child some basic life skills, you will help your kindergartener be more independent and confident.

Teach your child the proper way to hold utensils, and how to open a juice box, use a napkin, and tidy up the area when he/she is finished eating.

Make sure your child can get his/her jacket on and off without help, and operate zippers, snaps, and buttons.

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



# Social and Emotional Growth

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Kindergarteners have a lot to deal with—new school, new teacher, new classmates, and new routines. Kindergarten also presents students with a whole new world of social interactions.

Here are some ways to help your child become more independent and build his/her social skills.

## Build independence

Kindergarteners are expected to be able to take care of more things on their own. You can help your child become more self-sufficient and independent by providing your child with choices, and giving your kindergartener age-appropriate responsibilities.

- ▶ Give your child a simple household task, such as feeding the dog, helping set the table, or watering the plants. Make sure the task is completed. Young children need to learn to finish what they start.
- ▶ Encourage your child to get dressed without your help. Be patient if your child becomes frustrated with zippers or buttons.
- ▶ Help your child develop decision-making skills by giving him/her choices. Let your child choose which shirt to wear, what to eat for lunch, or which game to play.
- ▶ When something is difficult, don't immediately swoop in to help. Let your child try to problem solve—and celebrate when he/she is successful.

## Encourage socialization

Friendships are becoming more important to kindergarteners, and they often start noticing who is included (and excluded) in play groups. 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 new situations, provide opportunities for him/her to experience different places and people.
- ▶ Play games. Games help children learn how to take turns, follow the rules, and how to win and lose.
- ▶ Encourage your child to use words to let others know what he/she wants and feels.
- ▶ Role-play situations your child may encounter at school. *"Let's practice what you'll say to Carly the next time she takes your crayons."*
- ▶ Praise your child when you see him/her using good social skills.

**Be a good role model. If your child sees you being friendly and treating others with respect, he/she is likely to do the same.**



## In Closing

Helping your child have a successful year doesn't require doing extraordinary things. It's the little things you do every day that provide the guidance and support your child needs.

With your encouragement, love, and support, your child is sure to be successful this year, and in the years to come.

# KINDERGARTEN

## Parent Guidebook

**Information, tips, and advice  
for parents of kindergarteners**

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