

READY FOR PRE-K

TOP
10

TIPS FOR PARENTS

1. Read books together every day. Ask your child questions about what you read.
2. Work on self-help skills, such as washing hands, using utensils, and putting on shoes.
3. Identify shapes and colors in books and in real life.
4. Establish a morning and nighttime routine and make sure your child gets plenty of sleep.
5. Build fine motor skills. Encourage your child to color, use scissors, and build with blocks.
6. Encourage responsibility. Give your child small tasks and make sure they're completed.
7. Practice having your child follow simple, one- and two-step verbal directions.
8. Talk about numbers, practice counting, and sort items by color or shape.
9. Talk to your child about starting Pre-K and discuss any fears they may have.
10. Build gross motor skills. Encourage your child to run, skip, and jump.

For more on building gross and fine motor skills, watch this video.



Building Pre-K Reading Skills



In Pre-K, children learn about letters, expand their vocabulary, and learn how to properly pronounce words. The following are just some of the things you can do with your preschooler to help build their reading readiness skills.

Read aloud to your child

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

As you read, talk about the story and the pictures. Ask questions, such as:

"What do you think will happen next?"

"What would you do?"

"What was your favorite part?"

"How do you think the character felt?"

Connect your child's experiences to what's happening in the story. *"She has a dog just like we do. Do you think her dog is as big as our dog?"*

As you read, move your finger under the words to help your child learn that words go from top to bottom and left to right.

Look for words in everyday life

Increase your child's interest in reading by showing that words are all around us.

- ▶ When driving, look for familiar words on store fronts, street signs, and billboards.
- ▶ While watching TV, playing games, or running errands, point out words your child might know.



For more, watch this quick video!

Building Pre-K Writing Skills



Children spend a good deal of time in Pre-K working on emerging writing skills—with a focus on learning how to properly hold a pencil and strengthening hand muscles.

Here are some things you can do to help your preschooler build his/her writing skills.

Stock up on supplies

Encourage your child to practice writing by having supplies readily available.

- ▶ Provide different kinds of paper, crayons, pencils, markers, and notepads for coloring and scribbling.
- ▶ Chalkboards and dry erase boards with various colors of chalk and markers provide a fun way for children to practice writing.

Develop hand muscles and motor skills

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

To strengthen hand muscles:

- ▶ provide playdough or clay to squeeze, pull, and manipulate into shapes.
- ▶ crumple up pieces of newspaper and throw them into a wastebasket.

To help develop fine motor skills:

- ▶ help your child put a puzzle together, string beads, and build with blocks.
- ▶ let your child cut up magazines using child-safe scissors.



For more, watch this quick video!

Building Pre-K Math Skills



In Pre-K, children build math readiness skills—skills that will help them do more complicated math in the years to come.

Pre-K math activities

Here are some of the skills your child is likely to work on in Pre-K.

- ▶ counting (including understanding what “how many” means)
- ▶ sorting items by color or shape
- ▶ comparing objects using terms like *bigger*, *smaller*, *more*, and *less*
- ▶ identifying and creating shapes

Look for numbers in everyday life

Throughout the day, look for opportunities to count items, compare and sort objects, and use numbers.

- ▶ As you drive around town, point out the numbers you see on buildings, billboards, street signs, and houses.
- ▶ When you see a number, ask what number comes next. “We’re reading page 11. What number comes after 11?”
- ▶ Talk about the numbers you see on items such as calendars, cereal boxes, and clocks.
- ▶ Have your child count the carrots on his/her plate, the coins in your wallet, or the socks coming out of the dryer. Before eating a bag of M&Ms, count how many there are of each color.



VIDEO

For more, watch this quick video!

Building Pre-K Social Skills



Pre-K is an important time for helping your child develop the social skills needed to make friends, communicate their wants and needs, and adapt to different social situations. Below are some quick and easy tips for helping your child build valuable social skills.

Build basic skills

While children have varying levels of social skills, the following are some basic skills for you to work on with your child.

- ▶ Listen when others are talking.
- ▶ Show interest in what others are doing.
- ▶ Begin to take turns with peers.
- ▶ Initiate interactions with others.
- ▶ Begin to share toys with others.
- ▶ Remember classmates’ names.
- ▶ Use good manners.
- ▶ Feel empathy for children who are sad or upset.

Create and monitor social opportunities

Provide opportunities for your child to play and interact with others. Start with short periods of time, and provide adult supervision.

- ▶ Set up play dates with classmates, and look for social opportunities with family and friends.
- ▶ Try to let children settle their own differences, but stay within earshot so that you can model problem-solving behavior if needed.



VIDEO

For more, watch this quick video!

Building Pre-K Life Skills



By teaching your child some basic life skills, you can help your little one be more confident and independent, and more successful in the years ahead.

Teach self-care skills

It might be easier and quicker for you to put your child’s jacket on yourself, but taking a few extra minutes to teach self-help skills will encourage independence and build self confidence.

Take some time to help your child learn how to do the following:

- ▶ use the restroom
- ▶ wash his/her hands
- ▶ use eating utensils
- ▶ drink from a cup or juice box
- ▶ put on a coat and hat
- ▶ button, snap, and zip
- ▶ cover his/her mouth when sneezing or coughing
- ▶ take shoes off and put them back on

Give your child choices

Making choices at home will help your child be able to make good choices and decisions at school and on the playground. As part of your daily routine, ask questions like these:

“Do you want to wear your blue or your green shirt?”

“Should we have grilled cheese or tacos for lunch?”

“What game do you want to play?”



VIDEO

For more, watch this quick video!

Building Pre-K Motor Skills



Developing motor skills will help your child be more confident and successful, both in and out of the classroom.

Gross motor skills

Gross motor skills involve movement of the muscles in the arms, legs, and torso. Gross motor skills are used on the playground, in sports, and in other physical activities.

By the age of 4–5 years, your child should be able to do the following:

- ▶ run, jump, and climb well
- ▶ balance and hop on one foot
- ▶ skip with alternating feet
- ▶ walk forward and backward on a balance beam
- ▶ throw a ball, and catch with two hands
- ▶ maintain momentum on a swing

Building gross motor skills

Here are some ways you can help develop your child's gross motor skills.

- ▶ Play catch in the back yard, or kick a soccer ball back and forth.
- ▶ Take your child to the park to run, swing, and climb on the playground equipment.
- ▶ Draw a hopscotch course to practice hopping and standing on one foot.
- ▶ Hike trails that involve climbing over and around obstacles.



VIDEO

For more, watch this quick video!



Pre-K Success Tips for Parents

Help your child have a great year in Pre-K! The following ten tips will help you put your child on the path to success this year—and for years to come!



1. Read to your child every day.

As you read, talk about the story and the pictures, and ask your child open-ended questions. Move your finger under the words to show your child that we read from left to right.



2. Help develop literacy skills.

Teach your child the letters of the alphabet. Read an ABC picture book, sing the alphabet song, and talk about the sounds individual letters make.



3. Set routines.

Routines for sleep, meals, and play make your day run more smoothly. Routines also provide structure and stability for young learners.



4. Teach responsibility.

Give your child age-appropriate chores such as picking up their toys, making their bed, and putting dirty clothes in the laundry hamper.

Learning responsibility is a big part of being successful in Pre-K. Watch this video for more!



VIDEO

READY FOR KINDERGARTEN



TIPS FOR PARENTS

1. Read together every night. Choose simple books so your child can follow along.
2. Sing the alphabet song. Talk about letters and the sounds they make.
3. Practice identifying numbers, shapes, and colors in books and in real life.
4. Encourage your child to speak clearly and in full sentences.
5. Practice fine motor skills by encouraging your child to color, use scissors, and play with clay.
6. Take a simple word (e.g., *ball*, *hit*) and together come up with words that rhyme.
7. Visit the library often. Get your child excited about books and reading.
8. Find everyday opportunities to count out loud and encourage your child to count with you.
9. Give your child two- and three-step directions to follow, and ask your child to repeat them.
10. Get your child used to putting on their own jacket and cleaning up after themselves.



VIDEO

To review, watch this quick video!

Kindergarten

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.



VIDEO

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

Kindergarten

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.

Kindergarten

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.

Kindergarten

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.

Kindergarten

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.

Kindergarten

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.



Kindergarten Success Tips for Parents

Help your child have a great kindergarten year. These ten tips are sure to put your child on the path to success this year—and for years to come!



1. Read to your child every night. Reading to your child expands his/her vocabulary, stimulates your kindergartener's imagination, and improves your child's listening skills. It also nurtures the bond between you and your child.



2. Encourage active reading. 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?"



3. Develop writing skills. Encourage your child to write simple thank you notes and get well cards, and to title and sign his/her artwork.



4. Build math skills. Look for ways to talk about numbers in everyday life. Ask your child to bring you a certain number of objects, and play games that require counting.



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

Kindergarten Screening



Information for Parents

Kindergarten screenings are common in many districts and states. As a parent, you probably wonder what these assessments measure, and how the results are used. Here is some information that will help you better understand kindergarten screenings.

Kindergarten Screening Overview

Screenings vary from district to district and state to state, but they generally assess all or some of these basic areas: language development, math skills, social/emotional skills, gross/fine motor skills, and self-care skills. Here are some things your child may be asked to do as part of their screening:

- ▶ give basic information such as name and age; rhyme simple words; follow simple spoken directions
- ▶ identify basic colors and shapes, count objects, put together a simple puzzle
- ▶ wash their hands; button and/or zip a piece of clothing; put on shoes
- ▶ run, skip, and jump; throw and catch a ball; hop on one foot
- ▶ hold a pencil; draw basic shapes; use scissors; draw a person

Children may also have their vision and hearing screened.

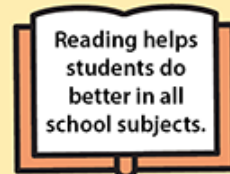
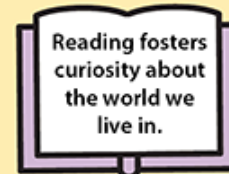
Want to help your child get ready for kindergarten? Watch this quick video.



VIDEO

The Importance of Reading at Home Information for Parents

Reading at home during early childhood is one of the most important things parents can do. Here are just a few reasons why.



Children who are read to at least three times a week are twice as likely to score in the top 25% of reading scores.



More books in the home correlates significantly with higher reading scores for children.



65% of American fourth graders do not read at grade level.



Children's books contain 50% more rare words than primetime TV.

Source: literacyprojectfoundation.org

Early Childhood School Attendance

Information for Parents



Regular attendance puts students of all ages on the road to success. However, developing good attendance habits during the early childhood years is especially crucial. Here's why you should make your child's attendance a priority.

Routine and structure

Going to school every day provides consistency, gives children a sense of security, and encourages them to learn and follow new routines.

Literacy skill development

Research has shown that only 17% of students who are chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade are able to read proficiently by 3rd grade.

Attendance promotes social growth

Young learners develop social-emotional skills that will help them throughout their lives. At school, they interact with others, make friends, and build relationships with people outside of their family.

Young learners are also exposed to early learning activities that boost creativity, problem-solving, and social growth.

Regular attendance is crucial for early-learning success.

HELP YOUR CHILD BUILD CONFIDENCE

Children who are self-confident are willing to try new things, and better able to cope with setbacks. Being confident also helps students succeed both in and out of the classroom.



Here are some tips to help your child build confidence.

ENCOURAGE NEW EXPERIENCES

Whether it's trying a new sport, learning how to use a camera, or exploring a more difficult hiking trail, allowing your child to try different things and conquer new challenges will help build their self-confidence and boost their self-esteem.

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP OTHERS. Helping others has been shown to improve mental health and boost self-esteem. Choose toys and books to donate, or rake a neighbor's leaves together.

DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITY

Give your child age-appropriate household tasks, such as helping put away laundry, feeding a pet, or making their bed each day. Make sure that tasks are completed, and praise your child for their effort. Conquering even simple tasks can lead to big gains in self-confidence.

Watch this video to learn more about teaching responsibility.



VIDEO

MENTAL HEALTH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS



Just as you look after your child's physical health, it's also important to support their mental health. Here are some ways that you can help your child protect, improve, and maintain their mental health.

LOVE YOUR CHILD UNCONDITIONALLY. In order for your child to feel secure and accepted, they need to know that your love doesn't depend on good behavior or accomplishments. Regularly tell your child that you love them. This is especially important when things are hard and your child is not at their best.

NURTURE YOUR CHILD'S CONFIDENCE. Encourage your child to try new activities and master new skills. Give them opportunities to show you how capable they are, and help them learn from the mistakes they make.

LET THEM PLAY. In addition to being fun, play can be a great stress reliever. Play is also important because it teaches your child self-control, creativity, and problem-solving skills—all of which will help them maintain their mental health as they grow.

TEACH CALMING TECHNIQUES. It's helpful for children to know how to calm themselves when they are upset, angry, or worried. For a few simple calming techniques, watch this short video.



VIDEO

Calming Techniques



Information for Parents

While anger, stress, fear, and worry are complicated emotions for young children, calming techniques can help them relax and recenter.

Here are some tips to help your child cope with these complex feelings, as well as some calming techniques you can try at home.

Validate your child's emotions

The first step to helping your child manage their emotions is to acknowledge and validate them.

Be accepting of negative emotions.

Some children believe that negative emotions are unacceptable, so they let these emotions build up inside until they erupt and are hard to control. Explain that it's normal to have a range of both happy *and* sad feelings, and encourage your child to notice and acknowledge them.

Label emotions. Encourage your child to label their emotions—both positive and negative. For example, *"My friend is moving away and that makes me really sad."* When you notice that your child is struggling, ask them to describe—in their own words—what they are feeling.

Don't minimize emotions. Show your child that you understand how they're feeling and that you want to help, even if whatever your child is upset about seems like a small thing to you.

Early Childhood Parenting Tips

Being a good parent doesn't involve doing extraordinary things. It's the little things you do every day that are the most important.

Use these tips to help your child thrive and grow now and for years to come!



Spend time together. Regularly spend one-on-one time with your child doing something you both enjoy.



Be excited about school.

Talk to your child about school and make sure your child knows that school is very important.

Limit screen time. Decide how much screen time is appropriate for you child and stick to it. Put all devices away during meals and family time.

Encourage a healthy lifestyle. Make sure your child maintains a healthy lifestyle with a balanced diet, lots of play time, and adequate sleep.



The Importance of Sleep



Information for Parents

Did you know?

Experts recommend that children between the ages of 3–6 get 10–13 hours of sleep each night.

Getting enough sleep has a direct impact on a child's mental and physical health.

Here are just a few reasons why getting a good night's sleep is so important for children.

► Improved learning

Children who get enough sleep have an easier time paying attention in school and at home. Sleep also helps with memory and motivation.

► Behavior and mood

Getting enough sleep helps decrease instances of irritability, anxiety, moodiness, frustration, and stress.

► Physical health

Sleep gives your child's body time to rest and recover. Not getting enough sleep is associated with long-term health issues, including diabetes and obesity.

For many parents, helping their child establish a healthy sleep routine can be a struggle. Keep reading for some tips on how to make bedtime easier.