

Getting Your Child Ready for Kindergarten (and the World)

The Parent Helper
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“*School readiness*”, “*ready to learn*”, “*ready for school*”, or “*readiness skills*” are all expressions that you will hear as your child gets closer to starting kindergarten. But what does it mean to be “ready”?

It is important to remember that **ALL** children are always “ready to learn.” From birth, children learn things every day through their experiences and interactions with adults, other children and things in their environment.

When schools talk about children being *ready* they’re talking about whether children have specific skills and information that will help them succeed in school, such as counting, knowing letters and the sounds they make, and being able to work in small groups.



FUN THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR PRE-K CHILD:

To help your child with important skills for kindergarten, try these activities:

- **Read, Read, and Read Some More!** You know your child likes to hear the same story again and again - so have fun picking out a new picture or letter to talk about each time, or ask your child to “read” a favorite story to you - even if he doesn’t really know how to read words yet.
- **Practice the Alphabet:** When you are running errands with your child, play games in the car, having your child pick out letters on signs and items in the grocery store.
- **Name That Thing:** Help your child learn how to describe how things look and what they do by playing the “Name That Thing” Game. Example: Ask your child, “What’s round and you bounce it?” (Answer is, of course, ball).
- **Counting in Every Day Activities:** At the grocery store, have your child count how many items you put in the cart, and ask how many there would be if you add one or take two away.

AS YOUR CHILD GETS CLOSER TO KINDERGARTEN AGE, AROUND FOUR YEARS OLD:

Contact your local elementary school or school district and request information on kindergarten enrollment. They will have information on what is needed to enroll your child in the local school system, as well as information on the kinds of skills and abilities they would like for all children coming into kindergarten.

Skills That Will Prepare Your Child

Many skills make up a child’s readiness level. Most of these skills develop naturally over time. However, some may not. If you are aware of the types of things your child should know and be able to do, you will be better able to help your child. Schools want all of their students to learn and succeed. Ask yourself these questions when preparing your child for kindergarten. Is my child:

- **Familiar with and knows** items in the environment?
- **Able to understand** what others say?
- **Able to be understood** by others?
- **Able to do basic self-care activities** such as feeding and dressing himself?
- **Sociable and likes to be around others?**
- **Able to stay with an activity** for 15 minutes or more?

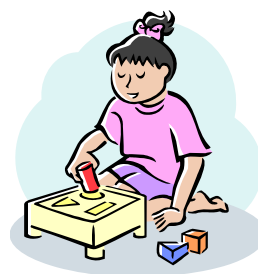
- **Able to follow simple directions?**
- **Able to do large and small muscle activities**, such as cut with scissors or ride a tricycle?

Parents and Caregivers Working Together Ahead of Time

If your child is in a regular child care arrangement, such as a center-based setting, a family child care home, a family member, or some other child care arrangement, it is important to talk regularly to your child’s provider.

Parents and caregivers can work together on readiness skills by:

- Regularly discussing your child’s daily activities, making sure a variety of activities that include reading, writing, building, and creative play, are being offered
- Making a plan for transitioning into preschool or kindergarten as time approaches that includes:
 - talking with your child about the new school,
 - saying goodbye to old friends,
 - visiting the new school, and
 - meeting with your child’s new teacher.
- Including routines that may be part of the kindergarten routine, such as circle time



What If... My Child Isn’t Ready?

Children grow and develop at different speeds. Just because your child may not be able to do something today, doesn’t mean that he will not be able to do it next month. Kindergarten “ready” skills are guides for parents. They are not meant to be used as “must have” skills before going to kindergarten. If your child does not yet have a skill, or is behind in any one certain area, it doesn’t mean that he is not ready to go to kindergarten.

The point is to work with your child on a variety of skills and activities. If your child seems particularly behind on tasks that most children at that age are able to do, talk to your pediatrician and caregiver. Discuss your child’s development and progress with those who work with her on a regular basis to get a complete assessment of your child’s abilities.

If your child has a lot of delays in readiness skills, and you feel that your child may not be ready for kindergarten, work with your local school system. They will help to determine if your child should or should not go on to kindergarten just yet.

For More Information Visit:

<http://www.ccaparentnetwork.org/members/1905/06/26/getting-your-child-ready-for-kindergarten-and-the-world/>

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