

Ready for School?

What Should Your Child Be Able to Do?

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Every child develops at a different rate. The first five years are very important learning years because the brain is forming concepts that will last a lifetime. A preschooler’s brain grows so fast! Using the preschool years to prepare children for school is very important.

Children must learn how to play and get along with others and how to sit for periods of time, watch, listen, and be curious. All of these skills prepare children for problem-solving and for mastering the skills needed for school success.

Skills learned in preschool are the beginnings of later reading, writing, and math. Children who start school with some ability to recognize words and numbers and who know how to ask questions adjust to school better.

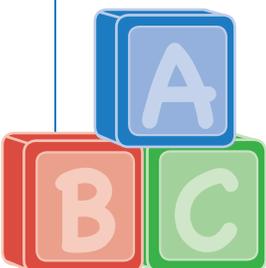
Getting children ready is only part of “school readiness.” Families, schools, and communities also play an important role in supporting the child’s readiness. FAMILIES must be involved in their child’s life and feed their excitement for learning and curiosity.



Following is a chart that parents and teachers can use that will help explain and guide them on how to prepare children for school.

What should children be able to do?	What does this skill mean?	Why this skill is important	What you can do to get them ready
Get along with others	How to share, listen, ask questions, and seek to understand.	Children who are interested in learning and taking time to examine, take apart, create, and listen to responses are ready to learn further.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions. • Be available and respond. • Decrease and monitor television use. • Minimize electronic device use. • Go to the library for books. • Take walks and look around. Talk about what you see.

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Express feelings appropriately	<p>Children are not born knowing how to control their crying, desires, or whining. Caring adults must teach this.</p> <p>Adults also must model how to manage emotions.</p>	<p>Children who say they are sorry are learning to feel sorry for others/ empathy.</p> <p>Children who learn to wait for short periods are learning patience.</p> <p>Children who offer a toy to a new friend are learning positive social interactions.</p> <p>Children who seek help when needed and try new things are becoming learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name feelings. Ask: "Are you feeling angry?" or "Are you frustrated?" • Prepare children for what will come next. • Tell them how you expect them to behave before entering a setting. • Discuss afterward if they lose control. Make a plan for how they will behave next time. • Praise children when you notice them acting in a positive way.
Follow directions	<p>When children start school, they start a lifetime of following directions.</p>	<p>Following simple directions such as "stir up this egg, and then add the milk" helps them move to more complex instructions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do tasks together and ask child to follow directions. Give one direction at a time. Then try two directions. <p>Examples:</p> <p>"Add the liquid soap and use the sponge to wash the tires."</p> <p>"Take the trash bag out and tie it. Place it in the can in the garage."</p> <p>"Pick out two outfits, and I will look at your selections."</p>
Name numbers, shapes, and colors	<p>Naming numbers and shapes are starters for learning math.</p> <p>As they age, children learn to name items they understand. Later they learn to group items, and then to put things into sequence (small to large for example).</p>	<p>Pre-math is counting and sorting items. Can they count out apple slices or count socks in the drawer?</p> <p>Using thermometers, rain gauges, measuring cups, and other measuring devices also teaches math concepts of size and volume.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice counting to 10, then practice counting higher. • Turn naming or counting into a singing game. • Name shapes in everyday life (the moon is a circle, or that sign is a triangle, etc.). • Use blocks to teach concepts such as tall, high, long, how much, what will happen?



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<p>Know basic information by age 5</p>	<p>Being able to do things by themselves leads to independent learning. This includes cutting, pouring, buttoning their own clothes, zipping, throwing a large ball, and hopping on one foot. Children are also interested in learning to tie shoes.</p>	<p>Knowing basic information will help your child feel safe.</p> <p>Knows how to print own name.</p> <p>Knows address.</p> <p>Knows parents' names.</p> <p>Knows how to wash hands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a game: "What is your name, and where do you live?" • Use puppets to act out some basic information questions. • Give children freedom to choose clothes and dress themselves. • Ask children to do simple tasks in the kitchen.
<p>Show beginning awareness of sound and rhyme</p>	<p>Language development starts by learning to name things. First a child learns to name items they can see, and then they learn to group like things together. Later they will learn to put things in order by size, color, or category.</p>	<p>Can name things they see in pictures or in day-to-day living, such as car, juice, vacuum, toilet, shirt, socks, sink, rug, sofa, porch, light switch, pitcher, spoon, frypan, hammer, and more.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use picture books and name items • Talk to children as you help them get dressed. Name body parts, colors, items of clothing. • Notice when words rhyme, like share and hair, brown and clown, hat and cat. • Recite and sing fun nursery rhymes. Nursery rhyme books are helpful and fun. Dr. Seuss books are great for rhyming.
<p>Aware of print and words</p> 	<p>Children must learn that words are symbols that have meaning.</p> <p>Children must learn that pages are read from left to right.</p> <p>Children learn that reading leads to interesting things.</p>	<p>So children can see that words represent concepts, and concepts are interesting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct children to find words in day-to-day life (stop sign, words in a book, words in a store). • Label items at home (blocks, shoes, dishwasher, bean seeds that you planted, etc.). • Let children tell a story and write it down so they can read it back. • Let children form letters and pretend to write stories and letters. Use large and small pieces of paper, magazines to cut words, and various colors of markers. • Point to words with your finger so children see that letters make up words and words make up sentences.

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<p>Read aloud</p>	<p>Children need to hear the rhythm of their own voices.</p>	<p>Reading aloud helps a child be a better silent reader.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After children become familiar with a story, have them “read” it back. (Actually they are telling the story, but it is truly pre-reading.) • Have children pick a book to use to tell a story, using a puppet to talk. Look through the book together first. Guess what the story may be about.
<p>Recognize letters</p> 	<p>Letters form words. Understanding the letter sound helps children begin to know words.</p>	<p>Understanding letters leads to understanding words.</p> <p>Understanding words leads to understanding sentences.</p> <p>Understanding sentences leads to problem-solving.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick a letter of the day and think up as many words that begin with that letter as you can. Keep a long list of words for each day. • Show children a letter and get them to name it. Ask them to trace it with their fingers. • Gather letters cut from magazines or use magnetic letters or letter blocks. Put all of the letters in a pile and ask children to find the “M” or another letter. • Use the children’s names and think of other words that start with each letter of their names. • Make letters on scraps of paper. Scramble them up and have children select letters that spell their own name. • Use inexpensive magnetic letters and a cookie sheet to practice spelling names or forming basic words.

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<p>Vocabulary</p> 	<p>Build the number of words the child knows.</p>	<p>Knowing more words leads to better understanding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend talk with children by asking questions. Encourage them to speak in complete sentences. Add new words. • Example: "I see the bees. Did you know honey bees live in a hive?" • Example: "While we are shopping, we need to find a juicy yellow lemon for lemonade. Lemons are fruits." • Use conversation in places where you are together. • Answer questions if children ask them. Give children a new word when it seems they are ready for it. • Show children pictures (in books and magazines). Ask them what they think is happening in the picture. Use descriptive words such as big, little, dark, happy, sad, and more.
<p>Practice self-care</p>	<p>Children are able to independently take care of personal needs.</p>	<p>With a group of children, teachers have a hard time zipping and buttoning each coat or sweater. The more children can do for themselves, the less they will have to wait for assistance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow them to select clothes from two or three outfits you lay out for them. • Begin with putting on pants or shirt and then add socks and shoes. • Show them and let them practice zipping, fastening Velcro, and buttoning. • Teach children to flush the toilet, wipe well, and wash hands.

Sources

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