

Kindergarten Countdown!

Getting Ready for School

5 Ways Parents Can Help



The best all-around things you can do to help your child get ready for school are the ones that come most naturally – to play with your kids, to enjoy them and talk with them about everything in their world.

1. Encourage play

Play is a child's learning laboratory. If you watch a child at play, you'll see how he explores, experiments and tries to make sense of what's happening. It's this natural curiosity and the drive to discover that is the root of all learning. So, just nurture it, encourage it. Help your child have fun playing.

2. Encourage language

Talking to your child and listening to her strengthens your relationship and deepens bonds. Beyond that, children learn language by hearing it and later by using it themselves. So talk, talk, talk. Talk about what you're doing and about what you see your child doing.

3. Pennies in the bank

Think of playing and talking as pennies in the bank. You're helping your child learn in the natural way that she is wired to learn. This is how her brain works, and you're giving her brain the input it needs to absorb information, ideas, language, and concepts. It's all going in, and it's fun!

4. Read, read, read

The surest way to help a child get ready to become a reader is to read to him. Read stories. Tell stories. Children will have their favorites that they want to hear over and over. Don't forget nursery rhymes, little poems or raps and singing songs. They all deepen a child's understanding of language.

5. Don't compare

One of the biggest mistakes we make as parents is to compare children's abilities, especially in their early years. Some children walk at nine months, some at 15 months. Some children talk early, others talk later. Some children are bold and assertive; others are shy or tentative. Child development isn't a contest. Sooner doesn't mean better or smarter.

Remember, it's said that Einstein didn't talk until he was four. Each child has a unique timetable of development. Early childhood experts will tell you that you can't hurry it, and there's no reason to. So just enjoy your child at every stage of development – be patient, encouraging and supportive.

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(continued)



Some skills for kindergarten

Here are some skills and strengths children will be building in kindergarten. You can help your child begin to learn these things by including them in the natural experiences of play and interaction you have every day. It does not help to drill children or to put pressure on them to learn. Some children will be ready to learn these things before they enter kindergarten, others will not. Again, it all depends on their development.

- Names of colors
- Names of some shapes (circle, square, triangle)
- Identifying some letters
- Counting to ten
- Cutting with blunt-nosed scissors
- Writing your first name
- Positive experiences playing with others
- Follows two and three step directions
- Verbally communicates wants and needs
- Listens to stories and enjoy them
- Shows curiosity and interest

Give your child opportunities to learn these things as he plays, simply by talking about them. Don't insist your child shows you what he know by quizzing him. Instead, just casually give him input. "Oh, look you're putting the red block on the blue one." Or, "Let's see how many carrots are on the plate. One, two, three, four, five carrots." Incorporate the information into daily routines. "Do you want the red sweatshirt, or the yellow one?"

Your child may have some of these skills on the first day of kindergarten, but not others. Don't worry. He'll have most of them by the end of kindergarten. And that's what's important!