

Getting Ready for Kindergarten



Talk to your baby. Even newborns are building conversational skills: taking turns, using eye contact, cooing, and imitating sounds.

- Talk about what you or your child is doing in short phrases that match your child's speech.
- Expand on what your child says: Baby says, "Ball" and Mama says, "blue ball."
- Encourage your child to talk about what he or she is doing.



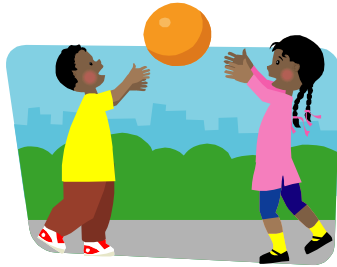
Play with your baby. Children learn by playing.

- Play with toys.
- Play with words.
- Pretend to be at the grocery store, be the teacher, or take a bus.
- Play at the playground.
- Be a ham and show your child what emotions are all about.
- Play Red Light, Green Light or Mother May I to teach your child self control.



Read to your baby. Even a tiny baby can learn to share a story with you. Reading builds vocabulary.

- Show how to hold the book
- Point to the words
- Point to pictures while saying what they are
- Allow your child opportunities to imitate you by pointing or vocalizing.



Find a playmate. Find another family with a child of similar age and have your children play together. Trading babysitting costs you nothing but time and provides valuable opportunities to socialize.

- Once your child is comfortable, start to trade baby sitting so that your child develops some independence and you have some time for yourself.



Find opportunities for your child to explore. Children learn in rich environments.

- Do a scavenger hunt around the neighborhood.
- Visit children's story time at the library or take your child to Home Depot's Kids Workshop. Both are free.
- Encourage your child to pretend play: have a tea party or pretend to shop.



Do arts and crafts with your child. This builds your child's muscle (or fine motor) abilities.

- Use materials of varying thickness and textures to make pictures, necklaces, or cards. Have your child use pens, pencils, markers, scissors, glue, sand, beads, noodles, sticks, or pebbles.



Let your child help with chores. Have your child help you with simple tasks around the house. This allows your child to work on following directions.

- Let your child sweep, wipe off the table, put toys away, and fold laundry.
- Play games where your child helps organize objects into Same vs. Different groups.



Take your child to the doctor. Make sure that your child can see and hear what is around him. Children learn through touch, smell, taste, hearing, and seeing.

- Children who have hearing infections may have difficulty learning speech sounds.
- Children whose eyesight is not good may have difficulty understanding what is happening around them.



Provide routines. Children do best when they have predictable routines.

- Make sure that children get enough sleep, enough food, and enough activity.



Turn off the TV. Time in front of a screen is less time spent interacting with you or simply exploring their world. Studies show that watching TV slows down brain development.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends

- **No** screen time for children under 2 years
- No more than one to two hours daily for children over 2.

Is My Child Ready for Kindergarten?



Enthusiasm toward learning. Children need to be willing to take risks.

- Is she eager to explore and discover?
- Is she comfortable asking questions?
- Does she persist even when a task is difficult?



Language skills. Children should be able to explain their basic wants and needs to an unfamiliar listener.

- Does he communicate his needs?
- Does he express his feelings appropriately?
- Is he able to explain events?



Ability to listen. Children need to be able to attend to a teacher long enough to understand directions and follow a simple story. Attention, memory, and comprehension are critical for learning.

- Can she follow simple instructions?
- Is she able to listen to an entire story without interrupting?



Desire to be independent. Children are expected to take care of many of their own needs in a classroom of 20 to 30 others: getting pencils, making requests, and organizing her own materials.

- Does she separate from parents when the baby sitter comes?
- Is she starting to take responsibility for her personal belongings?
- Can she follow simple two-step tasks?
- Can she use the bathroom by herself?



Basic letter and number awareness. Kindergarten carries an academic load. By the time kindergarteners end the school year, they are expected to recognize all of their ABCs and name numbers 0 through 30 along with many other skills.

- Can he sing and recite the alphabet and recognize some letters?
- Can he count to 10 and identify numbers one to five?



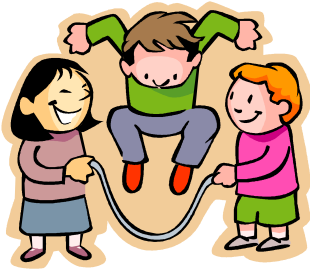
Strong fine-motor skills. Kindergarteners perform a variety of fine-motor tasks throughout the day: drawing, cutting, pasting, and sorting.

- Is she able to hold and use a pencil?
- Can she cut with scissors?
- Is she learning to write her name?



Strong gross-motor skills. Evidence shows that children who are active are more able to sit and learn. Children with good motor skills will probably have improved coordination and attention.

- Does he love to run, go down the slide, and play with a ball?



Ability to interact with children and adults. By the time children are in kindergarten, they should be well on their way to developing social skills.

- Is he able to share and take turns?
- Is he able to lose gracefully?
- Does he use good eye contact?
- Can he negotiate and problem-solve?

Get Advice and Observe!



Speak with your child's preschool teacher. Your child's teacher is a valuable resource. She can tell how your child deals with being in a group, what is easy for him and what he has difficulty with.

- If your child has attended preschool, talk to her teacher. As an educator, she will have a good idea of how your child compares to other children at the same level and whether she thinks she is ready or not.



Speak with your child's pediatrician. When in doubt, visit the doctor. It is never a good idea to “wait and see” when it comes to your child's developmental years.

- Your child's doctor will be aware of your child's physical and developmental maturity and will be able to offer her expert opinion.



Visit pre-k and kindergarten classes. By taking in the environment in a classroom, you more easily be able to visualize how your child will react to this environment. This will make your efforts to trouble shoot issues that come up more effective and efficient.

- Does the teacher focus on writing and phonics or is the curriculum based on hands-on activities?
- Look for a setting that would best fit your child's personality, temperament, and abilities.