



PREPARING FOR KINDERGARTEN

The move from preschool to “real” school is exciting (and often tearful) for both children and parents. There’s a lot you can do to make the transition to kindergarten enjoyable.

Making Friends with the School. Point out the school as you drive or walk past, and say, “That’s your school.” Take your child to play on the school’s playground after school, on weekends, and during the summer.

Learning Social Skills. *Sharing* is a regular part of the day in kindergarten. Help your child learn to take turns by sharing toys, crayons, and games with friends and family members. Waiting is tough for preschoolers, but you can help them get used to it by saying things like, “We’ll go to the park after lunch.” Teach your child to *communicate* with words, not actions, when upset. Emphasize that screaming, crying, hitting, kicking and other “temper tantrum” behavior is not acceptable.

Listening is Important. Looking at a person who’s talking to you is more than good manners when it’s the teacher who’s doing the talking. Work with your child on paying attention and following simple directions: “Please put your pillow on your bed, and then put your shoes in the closet.”

Loosening the Apron Strings. If your child is not already attending preschool or day care, look for ways for them to spend some time apart from you. Trade off with a friend, or sign your child up in a community or church program for preschoolers.

Who am I? Kindergarteners should know not only their full names, but the first and last names of their parents and caregivers. Memorizing your phone number and address may be a little easier for a preschooler if you set them to a familiar tune like “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

All by Myself. Your child should know how to zip, snap, tie, button and fasten Velcro. Be sure that your little one can also take care of his or her bathroom needs well before the first day of school.

Begin with Basics. Go beyond teaching your child the “ABC” song by working on letter recognition, especially letters that spell out his or her name. It is also helpful if your child can recognize isolated letters and those not in alphabetical sequence. Talk about the colors and shapes around you – the round clock, the red umbrella. Make simple counting a part of your preschooler’s day by counting aloud as you put each piece of silverware in the drawer, climb stairs, or bring in bags of groceries. Help your little one learn important concepts by “acting out” the differences between up and down, in and out, high and low, over and under, small and tall.

Ensure a Healthy Start. Make sure your child’s immunizations are up to date. A complete physical before the start of school is required. Vision and hearing tests are also a good idea. Start your preschooler on a school day regimen of bedtime and wake-up time several weeks before school starts. At this age, a child should have ten hours of sleep.

Most importantly, understand that your child is unique and will learn at his or her own pace. So do not become frustrated if your child fails to master simple skills right away. The best thing you can do to prepare your preschooler for kindergarten is to invest as much time as possible helping him or her learn new skills. The long-term results will be worth your efforts.