

Summertime Tips

for Preparing Kids to Enter Kindergarten

Entering kindergarten is an exciting step in your child's education. You can help your child feel prepared for this change by following the suggestions below.

In addition to these tips, parents are encouraged to check community newspapers, websites, centers and bulletin boards for local events to get kids ready for school.

Because learning begins at birth, parents can use the same basic principles — of reading, talking to and nurturing their child — to help them start getting younger kids ready for school, too!

8 weeks before

1. Read to your child at least 30 minutes per day. Most libraries have books appropriate for young children. When reading a story, ask your child, "What happens next?" and wait for the answer.
2. Have printed material around your house — the newspaper, magazines, etc. — and let your child see you reading often.
3. Take your child with you and talk to your child everywhere — at home, in the car, at the store, in the bank. Make up stories or songs about your outings.
4. Ask your child simple questions about the colors and shapes of objects. Count out number of objects. Point out letters and repeat what they are. Ask your child how he/she thinks objects are used.

6 weeks before

1. Encourage your child to draw on plain paper with crayons. Their scribbles are the beginnings of writing.
2. Schedule a visit with your child's doctor to make sure that all immunizations are current and also with your child's dentist. Most schools have standard requirements for immunizations, vision, and hearing tests. For an updated list of school requirements, contact your local school district.
3. If your child has a chronic health condition — such as asthma — or special needs, talk with your doctor or therapist about what arrangements need to be made at school to accommodate those needs. Also, try to schedule a meeting with your child's teacher before the school year begins — or shortly thereafter — to discuss those needs.
4. Make sure your child gets enough rest — eight hours a night is preferred.
5. Start the day right with a healthy breakfast — it helps kids concentrate.

4 weeks before

1. Start talking to your child about the change that is coming when they start school. Be positive, and give your child the opportunity to ask questions or express fears. Read books with your child about starting kindergarten.
2. Write down your child's questions about kindergarten as they come up. Call the school to get the answers and share them with your child.
3. Teach your child how to use the toilet by themselves, to wash their hands after going to the bathroom and before eating, to blow their own nose and to sneeze into their elbow.
4. Talk with your child and set an example for your child whenever possible about the importance of sharing.
5. Ask your child to help you clean up at home, so he or she will learn to put things back where they belong when asked.
6. Help your child get used to routines at school by encouraging him/her to eat at regular times at the table using silverware.

2 weeks before

1. Talk with your child about what to expect during a typical school day. This includes lunches, snacks, and bathroom breaks. The more you speak with your child about the details, the less anxiety he or she is likely to experience on that first day of class.
2. Reassure your child about what kinds of activities will happen at school and after the day is over. If they are going to after-school child care, talk about the activities and schedule during this time.

1 week before

1. To help overcome any fears, rehearse for the big day by practicing all the activities that will happen at school. Do a test-run of the new routine:
 - a. Wake up at the time necessary in order to give your child plenty of time to get ready.
 - b. Plan and fix a healthy breakfast. Teach your kindergartner how to help with this.
 - c. Lay out clothes the night before and make sure zippers, buttons and ties are able to be easily fastened.
 - d. If your child takes a school bus, walk to the bus stop and talk about boarding and where to sit. If you will drive them to school, talk about landmarks along the way.
 - e. Pack a lunch for both of you and sit down with your children and practice opening things together. If you will be sending a lunch, make sure it is nutritious food that they like and can open. Juice boxes, fruit cups, and zip lock bags can frustrate your child if they haven't had practice! Remind them to ask for help if needed. Teachers and lunch staff will be there to help.

2. Prior to that first day; meet the teachers, greet them and introduce your child. Be sure to express your appreciation for their hard work. If your child's school has a kindergarten open-house, attend as a family.

On the Big Day!

1. Give your child a family picture of you to keep in their pocket or backpack, and reassure them about what time you will be back to pick them up. Spend extra time on the first day of school, but do not "drag out" saying goodbye. Send them off with a reassuring hug and kiss!
2. Kindergartners sometimes have accidents. It's a reality that should be anticipated. Pack an extra pair of clothes for your child and bring it on or before the first day of class.
3. Getting and staying involved in your child's school activities will benefit not only you and your child, but the school and community as well. It sends a message to all that education and school is important. Speak with your child's teacher regularly, or even participate in your school's PTO/PTA.
4. Most importantly, celebrate and enjoy this milestone with your child!