



Strengthen your preschooler's kindergarten readiness skills

Summer is the perfect time to make sure your child is on the path to kindergarten readiness. When children enter kindergarten, they do better if they already have some basic skills.

These include being able to:

- **Express themselves clearly.**
- **Listen and pay attention** for short periods of time.
- **Identify some colors.**
- **Compare and contrast** two objects.
- **Work with their hands.**
- **Locate print on a page** and know that it tells a story.

To promote these necessary skills:

- **Encourage your child to talk.** Discuss the things he sees. Ask him to name common objects. Point out colors. Ask him lots of questions.

- **Listen when your child talks.** Does he state his thoughts clearly? Can he retell an event in the proper sequence?
- **Let your child work with his hands.** Give him opportunities to build fine motor skills. Encourage him to paint and write. Show him how to zip and button his clothing.
- **Read together daily.** Encourage your child to hold books and turn the pages. Encourage him to “read” to you, too.
- **Ask your child to sort objects.** Have him sort the books and toys in his room. Before you wash clothes, have him put them in piles by type or color. Talk about how items are similar and how they are different.

Keep learning alive over the summer



Your child doesn't need to sit at a desk to keep learning this summer. Many kids of fun and

simple activities will keep her engaged and motivated.

Here are a few to try:

- **Make mealtime learning time.** Have your child sort utensils or count plates. Teach her about wholes, halves and quarters by folding napkins. Have conversations during meals. The bonding that takes place over family meals benefits kids socially and academically.
- **Be scrappy.** Help your child collect items to put in a scrapbook of summer memories. She can also paste in photos or drawings of her experiences.
- **Put on a show.** Being able to speak in front of others is valuable skill. Show your child how to make puppets from socks, or just use stuffed animals and bring them to life. Help your child think up a situation, such as visiting a friend or going on a trip. Then help her act it out using the puppets or dolls. Have her practice the show for her friends or other adults.

Build your preschooler's motor skills with fun physical activities



Sometimes it is easy to overlook the importance of motor skills for school success. But making sure your preschooler is as healthy as possible is a vital step in helping him learn. Developed muscles, bones and joints are the “drivers” of your child's motor skills.

Exercise is one important way to build motor skills. Exercise can also help your child:

- **Reduce stress.** Your child will be happier, calmer and better able to cope with the challenges of school and life.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** A child whose weight is at a healthy level is more likely to be an adult who keeps a healthy weight.

- **Sleep better.** A rested child is one who is ready to learn.

To keep your preschooler moving this summer, encourage him to:

- **Run, walk and skip.**
- **Participate in swim lessons.**
- **Ride a big wheel or scooter.**
- **Play a sport,** like kicking a soccer ball outside or bouncing a basket ball.
- **Play hopscotch** or tag with a friend. Have a balancing contest.

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”

—Lao Tzu

Help your preschooler develop a sense of social awareness



Is there such a thing as being too supportive when it comes to your preschooler's negative emotions? Experts say *yes*.

Parents who tend to be overly sympathetic about their children's troubled feelings think their kids are more socially well-adjusted than others. Those same kids' teachers, however, rate them as being less well-adjusted than their peers.

Why the disconnect? It could be that when parents indulge every bad mood their child has, the child never stops to consider that there may not be much justification for that mood.

This doesn't mean you should ignore your preschooler's feelings. But rather than rush to agree every time she feels she's been wronged, reserve judgment and:

- **Ask for details.** If your child says a friend was mean to her, find out more before jumping to her defense. Say, “Tell me what happened.” This way, you're encouraging her to open up but not automatically agreeing that she's a victim.
- **Challenge her.** Your child may be upset that she lost a game, but was that game really “unfair,” as she claims? Press her a bit. “Why wasn't it fair?” If the real story is that she didn't win because she made a few mistakes, then point that out. She wasn't mistreated; she just made a few mistakes. It's a hard—but vital—lesson to learn.

Source: V.L. Castro and others, “Changing tides: Mothers' supportive emotion socialization relates negatively to third-grade children's social adjustment in school,” *Social Development*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Are you finding ways to expand your child's world?



It's wonderful for preschoolers to enjoy familiar places and activities. But they also need new experiences to teach them about the world.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions to see if you're providing your preschooler with engaging learning adventures:

- ___ **1. Do you make** it a habit to try new things as a family, such as interesting foods and sports?
- ___ **2. Do you visit** new places with your child, such as outdoor historical sites and parks?
- ___ **3. Do you go** to the library regularly so your child has plenty of new books to read?
- ___ **4. Do you plan** opportunities for your child to meet and play with new friends—even if it has to be virtually?
- ___ **5. Do you ask** your child to participate in new activities, such as baking or finger painting?

How well are you doing?

If you answered mostly *yes*, you're doing a great job of teaching your child about the world. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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Encourage responsibility by involving your child in chores



How do you get your preschooler to do chores willingly? Most children love to make a plan and then carry it out. So first,

involve your child in brainstorming what needs to be done around the house and when. Then:

- **Give your child a choice.** Together, make a list of age-appropriate chores, such as dusting, sweeping, folding laundry, feeding a pet and helping with yard work. Let your child choose which ones he'd like to do.
- **Schedule a family work time** when everyone has a chore to do.
- **Be a good model.** Dive into chores without complaining. Instead, talk about how good it feels when you finish a necessary task.
- **Be encouraging.** Say, "Here's the broom so you can help! Let's do this together."
- **Make a game of it.** Set a timer and see if your child can beat the clock. Turn on some music and work to the rhythm of the beat.
- **Rotate chores** each week, so no one feels stuck doing a chore. Put chores on slips of paper and let family members draw from a bowl.
- **Use a chore chart.** Let your child place a star next to chores when he completes them.
- **Curb criticism.** Don't immediately say what your child did wrong. Gently show him what he could do to improve, but don't redo his work.
- **Follow chores with fun.** Have a box of index cards listing fun things to do when the work is through.

Give your preschooler plenty of opportunities to solve problems



Your child has the ability to think. But how far she takes this ability will depend on how much practice

she gets. During the preschool years, no one is in a better position to stimulate your child's thinking than you.

To provide your preschooler with opportunities to practice thinking and solving problems:

- **Help her anticipate.** Commanding "Put your toys away right now!" may in fact result in your child doing what you ask. But it doesn't do much to engage her brain. Instead, try, "I am going to set the timer for three minutes. I want you to get as many toys put away as you can before the timer rings." Now

your child has time to think: "It's time to put the toys away. What should I put away first? Where should I put my toys?"

- **Question, question, question.** Few activities make your child think more than having to answer questions with more than one word. Make a habit of asking your child "Why?" You can even turn her "why" questions back on her. If she asks, "Why are you getting your umbrella?" ask her, "Why do you think?" Be sure to always use a friendly tone.
- **Do not run to the rescue.** If your child says, "I can't get my shoe on," don't do it for her. Instead, give her a suggestion: "What would happen if you loosened the shoelaces?"

Q: My daughter just started attending a new day care and she bursts into tears when I drop her off. It's been a week, and things haven't gotten better. Is there anything I can do to make drop-off less stressful for both of us?

Questions & Answers

A: It's always difficult for parents to watch their children fall apart when it's time to say goodbye. But what's going on is normal for children of preschool age. Your child is still very dependent on you and being apart makes her feel unsure.

With the teacher's help, you can convince your child that she'll be safe and cared for at day care and you will *always* come back to get her. Here's how:

- **Show your child** you trust her teacher. Tell her, "If you need help, I want you to ask Ms. Casey. She will take wonderful care of you."
- **Reassure your child** about your return. Draw a picture of a clock that shows the time you'll return. Say, "When the clock on the wall looks like this, I'll be here." Or give her something of yours, such as a scarf or a photo, to keep with her.
- **Follow a short goodbye routine** with your child. Perhaps you can walk her to the front door and do a special handshake. Then you can give her a hug and kiss, tell her you'll see her soon, and go. Tears may still fall for a few weeks, but eventually the routine will be comforting to your child.
- **Stay in touch with the teacher** about how your child does after you leave. Ask her about the activities she seems to like best at day care and be sure to talk about them at home.

The Kindergarten Experience

Prepare your kindergartner for first grade



The kindergarten year is coming to an end and your child will soon be entering first grade!

While this transition is exciting, it can be a bit intimidating for kids and parents, especially after this unusual school year.

To make sure your child is ready, plan enjoyable summer activities that emphasize first-grade skills, such as:

- **Reading.** Attend virtual story times and other special library programs. Bring books wherever you go. Read with your child every day and spend time discussing materials. Talk about the difference between fact and fiction.
- **Writing.** Keep a journal of your family's experiences, such as swimming, hiking and seeing the ocean. Have your child add drawings and words to each page.
- **Counting.** Children love counting interesting things, such as blocks, steps, books and toys. Once your child has mastered the basics, move on to counting by twos, fives and tens.
- **Printing names.** Students may be required to write their first and last names on school papers. When doing summer projects, encourage your child to add his name with pride!
- **Social skills.** Continue to enforce rules and routines at home. Practice taking turns, and using good sportsmanship during games. Talk about how to recognize other people's feelings. Help your child practice sharing.

Maintain school routines over the summer for a successful fall

Summer is almost here, and even though your family's schedule may be about to change, certain habits should stay the same.

Experts recommend that families maintain these routines:

- **Stick to a regular bedtime.** You might adjust your child's bedtime for summer fun, but enforce it consistently.
- **Start on the right foot.** Help your child follow school morning routines *every* morning. For example, she should wake up, get dressed, brush her teeth, comb her hair and eat a nutritious breakfast.
- **Set aside a daily reading time.** Check out materials from the library to keep your home stocked with a variety of books.
- **Limit screen time.** No matter how much free time your child has, set healthy limits for the



amount of time she spends in front of the TV, computer and mobile devices.

- **Eat at least one meal together** as a family, if possible. Ask your child questions about her day.

Keep your child safe when going out with three strategies



Summer exploring away from the familiar confines of your home or yard demands a different kind of discipline.

And now that your child is a kindergartner, he may think he's all grown up. But even school-age children need to abide by adults' rules.

Talk to your kindergartner about ways he can stay safe this summer. In addition to social distancing and handwashing, follow these tips:

1. **Be hands on.** Tell your child when you are in a place where

he must hold your hand—such as crossing a street or entering a crowd.

2. **Be "eyes on."** When you are at a playground, teach your child to stay where he can see you and you can see him at all times.
3. **Establish a safe spot** or person that your child can go to if he is lost. A safe person could be a person in uniform or an employee. A safe spot could be on a bench, near a sign, or inside a store—in plain sight, out of traffic and away from water.