

Preparing Your Child for Kindergarten

Many parents ask, “What can I be doing right now to help prepare my child for kindergarten?” The following list will help parents spark curiosity and encourage development in key kindergarten readiness domains.

Social/Emotional Development

- Talk with your child. Talk about everything you are doing; discuss the steps. Include your child
- Encourage your child to play in small groups at the park
- Encourage your child to persist in tasks when encountering a challenge. Give him/her tasks slightly above his/her current ability level. When your child cannot find a solution on his own, encourage him to calmly ask for help
- Encourage your child to be a responsible member of the family by helping others such as setting the table for dinner and cleaning up common areas
- Play board games to practice taking turns. Allow your child to both win and lose.
- Set up play dates with friends of various ages
- Allow your child to stay with other trusted adults for a few hours at a time prior to kindergarten
- Teach responsibility and set clear expectations by requiring your child to clean up after play. Put one toy away before beginning to play with another

Language Development

- Go to the library together regularly. Read together and explore books independently. Have your child get their own library card.
- Read to your child for at least 20 minutes each day; ask your child what happened in the beginning, middle, and end of the story
- Read chapter books to your child. Ask your child what happened to a main character or what happened in the book last night?
- Give your child specific two-step and three-step verbal directions and encourage him/her to follow through. (e.g., Please take off your shoes and put them in the basket next to the door.
- Talk with your child when you’re in the car together. Talk about the world around you and the beginning sound of words for the things you see while driving.
- Consider removing movies and devices from the car. Instead, count the number of red cars that go by, look at the shape of traffic signs, find the alphabet, etc.
- Encourage your child to draw (without coloring books) and to draw the things they see around them

Cognitive Development

- Sort items according to color, size, and shape (laundry, blocks, silverware, toys, and other household items work well)
- Discuss patterns you see and try to predict the next item in the pattern
- Teach your child numerals up to 10, and practice counting to 30+
- Count and sort objects that you see. Remember that rote counting is not the same as understanding the meaning of the numbers
- Go on a shape hunt. Point out circles, triangles, squares, and rectangles to your child while you are taking or walk or grocery shopping
- Talk about positional and directional concepts like up/down, over/under, in/out, behind/in front of, top/bottom, beside/between, off/on, stop/go
- Talk about opposite words (big/little, empty/full, slow/fast)
- Talk about the relative size of objects; Use terms such as more than/less than

Physical Development (Gross & Fine Motor)

- Go to the park! Give your child plenty of opportunities for outdoor play: run, jump, and climb.
- Play catch with different size balls to help build hand-eye coordination.
- Practice skipping, galloping, hopping on two feet, hopping on one foot, etc.
- Teach your child to ride a bike/scooter
- Stack blocks together
- Practice using scissors to cut out a variety of shapes
- Encourage your child to hold the pencil correctly and write his/her name
- Make the playdough together and play with it regularly. Roll, squish, stamp, and even cut it!
- String large beads to make a necklace.
- Do puzzles together
- If the child wants to do workbooks because they have an older sibling, try mazes, dot to dots, spot the difference type books

Creative Arts

- Encourage pretend play and occasionally join your child in his fantasy world. Have a tea party with them, sail a ship, explore the jungle, etc.
- Encourage creativity. Give your child plenty of opportunities to draw freely or to combine two ideas into a single drawing. Don't limit them to coloring books.
- Teach your child to recognize colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, black, white, brown, and pink. Ask them to speculate what new color will result when combining two colors
- Use a variety of materials to let your child paint, draw and explore!