

10 important things to help your child get ready for KINDERGARTEN

Families play an important part in helping children be successful in school.

Parents are a child's first and most important teacher.

1 Talk it up.

Children learn the words they will later need to recognize and understand when reading. Talking to adults is the child's best way to learn new vocabulary and ideas. This talking lays the foundation to reading.

Talk with your children, even when they are babies. Eye contact with them is important. Sing songs, say nursery rhymes, and repeat back to a baby those "ba ba ba's" and "ga ga ga's." As coos and gurgles give way to real words, encourage your child to talk, repeating what the child is saying and elaborating for the child when appropriate.



Make time each day for individual conversations with children. Give each child your full attention during the discussion and be sure to spend enough time listening to what he or she has to say. Give the child the chance to take the lead. Add your own responses and comments to draw him or her out. Although they may not always be accurate in their responses, it is important for children to learn how to use language to express and describe their impressions and ideas.

2 Tell stories.

Once children reach school age, stories will become a very important part of their reading classes, so it is helpful for young children to become comfortable with stories and parts of stories, such as characters, and "what happens next." Young children are sensitive to sequence in language, such as following directions, and to sequences of events in stories.

Children also learn about reading and stories through the oral stories they hear in the world around them. When they witness one adult telling another, "You'll never believe what happened to me on the way to the store," they begin to learn the magic, fun, and purpose of stories. Tell children some of your own stories, about when you were a child, or about your own parents or grandparents. Encourage children to tell about special events, like holidays or trips. Use photo albums to remember and prompt these kinds of stories.



3 Read with each other.

Keep books, magazines, and newspapers around your home so you and your children will always have something to read. Read aloud other things you see. Read street signs, milk cartons, cereal boxes, and signs in stores.

Encourage children to start to pretend to read by listening closely, making positive comments, etc. Encourage children to start these beginning reading events by saying, "Now how about you read to me?" or "Your turn," after a book has been read (and liked) numerous times.

- Ask open-ended questions, such as "What do you think is going to happen next?" or "Why do you think he did that?"
- Move your finger under the words as you read aloud. This helps preschoolers connect printed words to spoken words.

4 Ask questions.

Can your child answer, "Why do you brush your teeth?" or "Where did you go?" Your child should answer a "why" question with a reason and a "where" question with a place.



Practice helping your child answer questions with sentences, not just single-word answers. Ask a variety of questions.

5 Repeat that.

Listening is a very important skill. **Help your child learn to listen. Say a sentence and have your child repeat it.** Start with sentences with just a few words and see if your child can repeat that sentence. Then try longer sentences.

6 Play rhyming games.

Most children notice rhymes and enjoy poems and rhyming songs; they make up silly names for things by substituting one sound for another (bubblegum, bubblebum, gugglebum, bumbleyum).

Say a simple word and let your child make up another word that rhymes with your word. Play rhyming games with your child: What other words sound like monkey?

Say two words and ask your child if the two words you said rhyme. Pick some rhyming word pairs and some pairs of words that do not rhyme. Challenge your child to sing or say rhymes as fast as he can and don't forget to laugh if the results come out silly!

Songs, rhyming games, language play, and nursery rhymes—these are all excellent ways to spark children's awareness of language and sounds. Children should play with sound and rhymes through a variety of games and songs.



7 Begin to know your ABC's.

Help children recognize at least some of the letters of the alphabet. Preschoolers who can recognize and print some letters have an advantage at school entry.

Children should have easy access to letters in many forms: alphabet blocks, letter cards, board games, and ABC's on wall charts at the child's eye height, to name a few.

Preschool-age children can begin to recognize some printed alphabet letters and words, especially the ones in their own names. Many children learn the names of the letters first by singing the alphabet song.

Some ways to learn letters

Help children to find the first letter of their own names. Many three-year-olds delight in identifying "their letter" printed in signs and on labels in the world around them. Use a capital letter for the first letter of the name and non-capital letters for the other letters in the name.



Write, display, and point out the child's name often. Print it on their artwork and help them recognize it.

Label some of the important things in the child's life. To make it fun, explain what you are doing and get the child involved in making artwork on labels for items like videos, books, and art supplies. Be sure to put up some signs that use the child's name, for example, "Marie's Room," "Sam's Treasure Box." Have the child decorate the sign. Be sure to help your child know the difference between capital and non-capital letters.

8 Identify beginning sounds.

Being able to hear the sounds in words is a very important skill needed in reading.

Name a word. **Have your child think of another word that starts with that same sound.**

Look at pictures with your child. **Have your child say the sound of the word that names the picture.**



9 Count on it.

Help your child count to 10. Touch objects and say the number names when counting in daily activities and play. You might count cookies on a plate or steps on a set of stairs. Have your child get to know numbers on a telephone.



Have your child help you put the groceries away. At the same time, give him/her practice with counting. Examples: Ask, "How many carrots did I buy? How many bars of soap? How many cans of soup? How many boxes of cereal?"



Determine "how many" in sets of 5 or fewer objects.

10 Take a trip.

When you go somewhere with your child, talk about what you are going to do before you do it and, afterward, talk about what you did. Let him/her do more of the talking by asking questions.



In daily routines, point out and read print all around you—such as words on a restaurant menu, labels on food containers, and signs out on the street.

Remember that, at early ages, children may not notice that what you are reading is the letters, not the entire sign or label. Environmental print is usually the first print children recognize. It plays a strong role in helping children begin to understand that letters and symbols mean something.

Questions? Please contact your school.

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