



# STARTING KINDERGARTEN OFF RIGHT

Help your child make a smooth transition

**So, your child is going to kindergarten! You must be very proud. But it's also natural to feel some anxiety. After all, it's the beginning of their formal education, and an important milestone both socially and academically. There are a number of things you can do to prepare your child, while keeping you both focused on the exciting aspects of this new adventure.**

You may have heard that kindergartens are more academically rigorous than they were a generation ago. For many that is true—but the skills your child needs to succeed are essentially the same. When kindergarten teachers are asked what abilities they hope incoming students will have, they say social and emotional skills and a readiness to learn are equally, if not more important, than knowing letters, numbers and shapes.

This brochure contains a few tips to prepare you both for success.

## Start preparing a year in advance

Most parents start preparation a month or two before kindergarten begins. That's okay, but starting a year in advance gives you the time you need to fully prepare your child mentally and physically.

You may see checklists showing all the things your child should know and be able to do before they start kindergarten. These are helpful, but not definitive.



Don't worry if you can't check off every box. Focus on building your child's confidence, social and emotional skills and eagerness to learn.

- ✓ Give your child opportunities to practice interpersonal skills such as taking turns and sharing.
- ✓ Join a play group, attend story hour at the local library and encourage interaction with new friends.
- ✓ Talk to your child regularly about their emotions; help them identify emotions in themselves and others.
- ✓ Give your child simple jobs at home, like picking up toys, and talk about why they are important.
- ✓ Teach your child to finish things they start, whether it's coloring a picture or picking up their toys.
- ✓ Make sure your child can follow directions—particularly two-step directions like “take off your shoes and then come sit at the table.” If your child doesn't follow them, ask them to explain why.
- ✓ If your child is using a computer or tablet to learn letters and numbers, don't forget to include time for writing and drawing, which are important to developing fine motor skills.
- ✓ Make sure your child knows basic personal information, including their name, age and gender.
- ✓ Give your child plenty of time to play outdoors, run, jump, imagine and explore.
- ✓ Keep track of activities that excite or frustrate your child. This is great information to share with their kindergarten teacher.



- ✓ Begin talking about kindergarten regularly—what it will be like, who will be there and what your child can look forward to.
- ✓ Read books about kindergarten.
- ✓ Enlist family members to ask your child about kindergarten and talk about it enthusiastically.
- ✓ Acknowledge any feelings of fear or anxiety as valid. Reassure your child that you will be there to support them.



For more information on fostering early literacy and other academic building blocks, see our brochure, "Preparing Your Child For School."

## As you get closer to their first day

- ✓ Have regular talks with your child about what to expect on the first day, such as the route the bus will take or where you will drop them off. Discuss the kind of work your child will be doing in class and the usual routine.
- ✓ Request an enrollment packet from the school. Note important dates and deadlines.
- ✓ Schedule a pediatrician appointment; make sure immunizations and health screenings are up to date.
- ✓ Attend an open house or schedule a tour of the new school.
- ✓ Meet the teacher and share information about your child's interests, strengths and any areas of concern.
- ✓ Find out if the school has online content for parents.
- ✓ Find out how you can become involved in your child's classroom, school committees and the PTA. Information on how to join PTA can be found at [pta.org/join](http://pta.org/join)
- ✓ Take your child to the school's playground. If possible, arrange play dates with other children who will be in their class.
- ✓ Discuss what items your child will need to bring to school and let them pick out a backpack.



## If your child has a disability

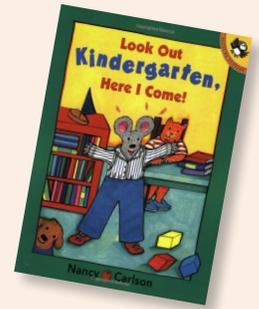
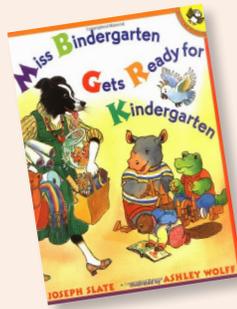
You may have additional decisions to make before kindergarten begins, such as the length of your child's school day, different school sites or program types. Begin working with the school as early as possible to create a plan.

Parents who have incoming kindergartners with disabilities should know that the federal special education law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) allows the school and the child's family to work together to develop either an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). During your IFSP or IEP meetings, make sure the plan is age appropriate for a kindergarten-aged child rather than a preschooler and best meets their needs in the least restrictive and most appropriate environment.



## Suggested Books

-  **Mrs. Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten**  
Joseph Slate, Ashley Wolff
-  **The Night Before Kindergarten**  
Natasha Wing, Julie Durrell
-  **Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!**  
Nancy Carlson



## Online Resources

### National Association for the Education of Young Children:

[NAEYC.org](http://NAEYC.org)

### Scholastic:

[Scholastic.com/Parents](http://Scholastic.com/Parents)

### National Parent Teacher Association:

[PTA.org](http://PTA.org)

## Other Resources

There is a range of other Parents' Guides to help you ensure your child thrives at school from K-12. Here are just a few examples:

-  Preparing Your Child for School
-  Raising Ready Readers—Helping Your Child Learn to Read
-  Raising Scientifically Literate Children
-  Helping Your Child with Today's Math

For these and other guides, visit [NEA.org/Parents/NEAResources-Parents.html](http://NEA.org/Parents/NEAResources-Parents.html) or [pta.org/familyguides](http://pta.org/familyguides)



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