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# Getting Your Child Ready For Kindergarten





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## **What does your child need to know before he or she starts kindergarten?**

The following are among the basic skills that children need:

**Know their name, address, birthdate, and phone number. Practice and review by having your child say their full name, their address, phone number and birthdate. Practice writing their name.**

**Be able to tie their shoes and get their coats on and off.**

**Be able to use the bathroom and wash their hands.**

**Have experiences cooperating with other children; wait their turn, work with others, share supplies, etc.**

**Use language appropriately and extensively.**

**Have a healthy feeling of self-worth and positive feelings of self and of others (can-do attitude).**

**Have good health and good nutrition habits.**

**Be a good listener. Be able to follow 2 step directions.**

**Know the letters of the alphabet. Know that sounds and letters correspond. Begin writing the letters.**

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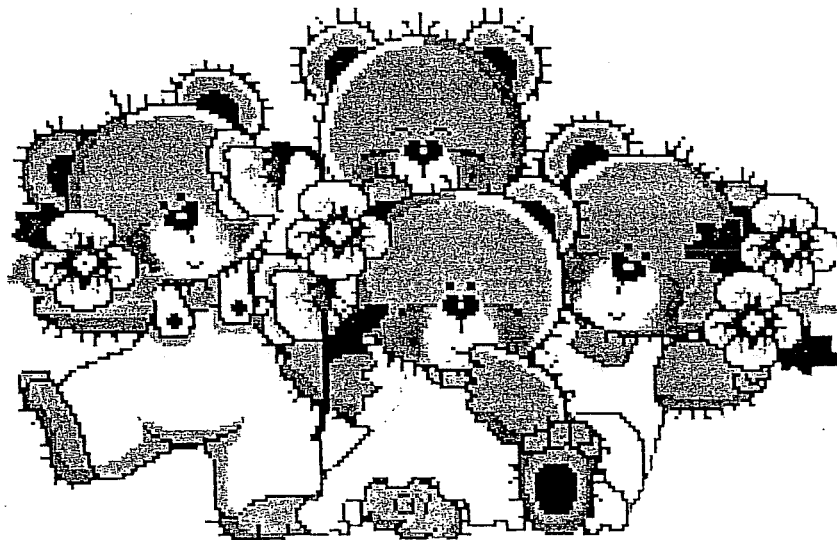
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Be able to count orally to 20. Understand number value.

Recognize and know basic colors and shapes.

Be able to coordinate large muscles for hopping, skipping, and running.

Use small muscle coordination for writing, drawing, and cutting.



# What can parents do at home to help prepare their children to succeed?

Visit the school with your child prior to the first day of school.

Allow your child to be a part of a play group, church group, or another group where she will learn to work and play with others.



**Read to and with your child. The single most important activity for building the knowledge for success in reading is reading aloud to children. Talk to your child about the meaning of stories. Help them to look for details in the pictures. Have them retell the story in their own words.**

Talk to your child as you go through the day's activities.  
**Try to spend at least 30 minutes a day talking and listening to your child.**

Talk about items found in the home and make labels together to show that the item names can be written down as words.

Limit your child's TV viewing. Children who are watching television are not playing outside, thinking, or being creative.

Buy or make hand puppets and help your child put on a puppet show after reading a favorite book.

Sing or recite nursery rhymes, songs and finger-plays.

Expect your child to succeed in school and celebrate when he does. Children work harder when their parents expect more and when parents recognize and praise their successes.

**Give your child tasks they can master. Help him learn one step at a time. Teach him to button his own clothing, climb steps. Build an “I can do” attitude.**

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Let your child make some of the choices. If he’s young, it may mean choosing a sandwich cut in triangles or squares.

If he’s older, he can decide what to do first, take a bath or pick up the toys.

Hug your child and let him know your love is unconditional.

Make learning fun. He will learn more and quicker if it’s exciting and “game-like”. “Let’s see who can find the blue squares!” Cook together. Finger-paint, color, draw, cut and paste. Take a nature walk.

Help your child choose healthy snacks such as fruit, carrot and celery sticks, plain popcorn, etc.

Keep up with immunization requirements. Call your doctor or local Health Department to see if your child needs additional booster shots.

Visit new and interesting places such as:

Library	Police Station
Airport	Bakery
Bank	Railroad Station
Farm	Museums
Park	Zoo
Post Office	Schools
Stores	Fire Station
Malls	



When your child paints, he is experimenting with color and shape. He is beginning an understanding of spatial relationships. He is experimenting with lines (thick, thin) and curves. He is developing awareness of shape and figure-ground discrimination that is used in reading.

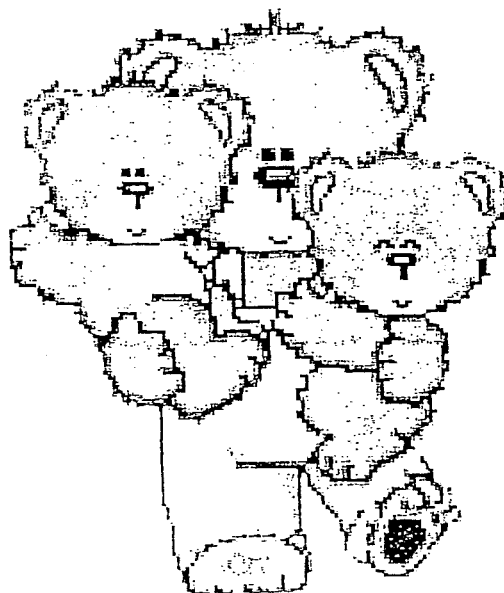
When your child plays with blocks, he is developing the perceptual skill needed for reading and writing. Both blocks and letters are made of lines and curves. Eye-hand coordination and hand-hand coordination is refined as the child positions blocks. These are the skills needed for reading and writing. He develops experience with patterning from experimenting with blocks. Blocks may be classified by size and shape. Children learn matching for size and shape by playing with blocks. All these are forms that lead to reading.

When your child plays with puzzles, he is becoming aware of visual and tactile cues. He can match pieces with empty space of the same shape. Puzzles are a self-correcting activity.

When your child plays with pegboards, he is gaining experience with making his own pattern. He can develop the ability to sequence, to repeat a pattern, to develop his eye-hand coordination.

When your child engages in dramatic play, he is increasing his vocabulary and clarifying the meaning of words. He can identify objects by shape, picture or written word.

When your child hears a story, he is matching what he hears with what he sees on the page. When a story is read again and again, the words become part of his language. Storytelling is another way of communicating in sequence. A teacher can maintain eye contact. When a teacher tells a story, this encourages young children to tell a story, also. Children like to tell stories about their own experiences.



# How Can I Help My Child With Letter Identification?

Recognizing letters is a prereading skill. Children must be able to identify letters in order to become successful readers.

- Work on the letters in your child's first name. When these letters are mastered, work on the letters in his/her last name.
- Ask your child to name letters in traffic or store signs. For example, "Say the letters in STOP."
- Ask your child to count how many i's are in Winn-Dixie. How many n's?
- Have your child point to all the Aa's found on the page in the story you read to them.
- Use magnetic letters on the refrigerator to review the alphabet.
- Write letters with paint, chalk, shaving cream, grits, or sand.
- Read and discuss alphabet books with your child.
- Play games with alphabet cards or magnetic letters. Ask your child to find all the c's, the upper case F and the lower case f, or the letter that begins like the picture.(See letter/sound pictures.)
- Have your child circle a letter on a page of newspaper or magazine using a red crayon. After circling the letter several times on one page, have your child connect the letters to form a "mystery creature." Have your child name the creature and tell you something about it. Write what your child says on another piece of paper. Read your child's words to him/her. Point to each word as you read.
- Let your child form letters with playdough. Talk about each letter.
- Have your child locate letters on food labels or cereal boxes.
- Have your child cut out letters in old magazines and newspapers and glue them on a piece of paper. Place all capital and lowercase Aa's on one page, all the Bb's on the next, and so on.



# Literacy at Home: Strategies for Parents

## Tips for Growing Readers and Writers

- **READ! READ! READ!** Find a cozy spot and have fun reading to your child. Locate the front of the book, show your child where to start reading and show them which way to go. Point to each word as you read to show the child word by word matching. Point out the concept of “first” and “last” as you read. Ask questions about the text and have your child retell the story. Ask them to show you a letter, word, and sentence. Ask or explain meanings of words as you read together. Reading aloud to your child provides them with many of the skills that are necessary for school readiness: Vocabulary, sound structure, the meaning of print, the structure of stories, language, sustained attention, the pleasure of learning and on and on.
- **Read and write yourself.** You are the best model and most important teacher in your child’s life.
- **Talk to your child and ask** questions that promote predicting, thinking and problem solving. **Listen** attentively when your child speaks to you. Children who have good listening and speaking skills have the foundation for becoming skillful readers and writers.
- **Do interesting things** together that encourage conversation and sharing.
- **Help your child notice the print all around us.** (signs, lists, mail, in stores, etc.) Write notes and make lists together.  
**Help your child notice rhymes and patterns in words.**
- **Have drawing, reading and writing materials accessible** to your child.
- **Celebrate your child’s steps in becoming a reader or writer with a smile, hug, and encouraging words. Success builds on success!**

# Getting Ready For Math

As you go about your daily activities, always talk to your child. Below are suggestions that could be used to help your child prepare for mathematical concepts.

- Sort objects by attributes - Help you to sort dark and light clothes to be washed or separate towels and washcloths. Sort socks by color etc. Talk about which group has more and which has less.
- Talk about events in order, using such words as first, next and last.
- Count objects with your child. Count backwards from 10 to 1.
- Talk with your about the shapes in your environment. (circles, triangles, squares, and rectangles)
- Talk about positions of objects such as over , under, beside etc.
- Talk about the days of the week and what day it is.
- Use coins with your child. Help them to identify a penny and a nickel.

# A Typical Kindergarten Day

Our day begins with a whole group time on the floor. We say the Pledge of Allegiance and listen to school announcements on the television. Then, we typically read sentences from the board explaining the day's activities and other interesting topics. These sentences are sometimes generated by the students and other times the teacher has already written the daily message. We use this time to talk about punctuation, capitalization, and sight word vocabulary. Teachers often read stories related to the theme for the week. We also review calendar activities and other number skills in an age appropriate way.

Next, students have morning center time. This time allows students to explore and use centers. There are many educational centers including: writing, computer, art, blocks, manipulatives, housekeeping, listening, puzzles, play-doh, estimation, etc. While small groups of students are working independently in the centers of their choice the teacher and assistance are holding "work centers" at their separate tables. The teacher will typically have a language arts activity such as: letter notebooks, guided reading, journal writing or poetry notebooks going on at one table while the second table has a mathematics activity such as: counting, number recognition, one to one correspondence, estimation, patterning, adding, subtracting, graphing, and more. Students are all rotated in and out of these "work centers" allowing everyone to participate and receive one-on-one or small group instruction. Morning centers are cleaned up and put away around 10:30 in preparation for lunch. Students wash up while the teacher or assistant reads or leads a short activity.

Following lunch, students go outside for a recess time and have a short quiet time. In the afternoon, students have a second center time much like the first, but with new activities in the teacher directed "work centers".

Our related arts program includes: art, music, physical education and computer lab once a week. We also visit the Media center for story time and to check out library books.

At the end of the day, students talk with their teachers to share and review the ideas from the day. Finally, kindergarten students are carefully taken to their different locations in the school so that they may walk home or be picked up by car, bus, or day care van. It's a great day for everyone.

# Family Resources

## *Web Sites*

### **Book Adventure**

[www.bookadventure.com](http://www.bookadventure.com)

Using Book Adventure, young readers not only receive the intrinsic satisfaction of reading a book and demonstrating their comprehension through short quizzes, but also earn rewards for reading and demonstrating comprehension of the books they've read.

### **Reading Pathfinder**

[www.readingpath.org](http://www.readingpath.org)

This Web site offers a database of articles, reading programs, local assistance, links, and information related to helping all children read well by the end of third grade. Questions from parents and reading experts were used to organize the Web site, which was developed by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

### **PBS Kids**

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

PBS Kids is made up of over a dozen sites connected to PBS characters. PBS Kids is a noncommercial, safe and educational online space just for kids. Online games, writing, and Did You Know sections are created with educational goals in mind.

### **PBS Between the Lions**

[pbskids.org/lions/](http://pbskids.org/lions/)

Between the Lions is an award-winning PBS children's series designed to help young children learn to read. The Web site includes games and materials from the show including the literacy curriculum aimed at children ages 4-7.

### **Parent Soup**

[www.parentsoup.com](http://www.parentsoup.com)

This parents' channel of iVillage.com provides articles and answers on a variety of parenting topics, from behavior to education. Information is also organized by children's age level, from toddlers to teens.

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# Dialogic Reading: An Effective Way to Read to Preschoolers

by Russ Whitehurst

Over a third of children in the U.S. enter school unprepared to learn. They lack the vocabulary, sentence structure, and other basic skills that are required to do well in school. Children who start behind generally stay behind – they drop out, they turn off. Their lives are at risk.

Why are so many children deficient in the skills that are critical to school readiness?

Children's experience with books plays an important role. Many children enter school with thousands of hours of experience with books. Their homes contain hundreds of picture books. They see their parents and brothers and sisters reading for pleasure. Other children enter school with fewer than 25 hours of shared book reading. There are few if any children's books in their homes. Their parents and siblings aren't readers.

Picture book reading provides children with many of the skills that are necessary for school readiness: vocabulary, sound structure, the meaning of print, the structure of stories and language, sustained attention, the pleasure of learning, and on and on. Preschoolers need food, shelter, love; they also need the nourishment of books.

It is important to read frequently with your preschooler. Children who are read to three times per week or more do much better in later development than children who are read to less than three times per week. It is important to begin reading to your child at an early age. By nine months of age, infants can appreciate books that are interesting to touch or that make sounds.

## What is dialogic reading?

How we read to preschoolers is as important as how frequently we read to them. The Stony Brook Reading and Language Project has developed a method of reading to preschoolers that we call *dialogic reading*.

When most adults share a book with a preschooler, they read and the child listens. In dialogic reading, the adult helps the child become the teller of the story. The adult becomes the listener, the questioner, the audience for the child. No one can learn to play the piano just by listening to someone else play. Likewise, no one can learn to read just by listening to someone else read. Children learn most from books when they are actively involved.

The fundamental reading technique in dialogic reading is the PEER sequence. This is a short interaction between a child and the adult. The adult:

- Prompts the child to say something about the book,

- Evaluates the child's response,
- Expands the child's response by rephrasing and adding information to it, and
- Repeats the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion.

Imagine that the parent and the child are looking at the page of a book that has a picture of a fire engine on it. The parent says, "What is this?" (the prompt) while pointing to the fire truck. The child says, *truck* and the parent follows with "That's right (the evaluation); it's a red fire truck (the expansion); can you say *fire truck*?" (the repetition).

Except for the first reading of a book to children, PEER sequences should occur on nearly every page. Sometimes you can read the written words on the page and then prompt the child to say something. For many books, you should do less and less reading of the written words in the book each time you read it. Leave more to the child.

## How to prompt children

There are five types of prompts that are used in dialogic reading to begin PEER sequences. You can remember these prompts with the word CROWD.

- **Completion prompts**  
You leave a blank at the end of a sentence and get the child to fill it in. These are typically used in books with rhyme or books with repetitive phrases. For example, you might say, "I think I'd be a glossy cat. A little plump but not too \_\_\_\_\_," letting the child fill in the blank with the word *fat*. Completion prompts provide children with information about the structure of language that is critical to later reading.
- **Recall prompts**  
These are questions about what happened in a book a child has already read. Recall prompts work for nearly everything except alphabet books. For example, you might say, "Can you tell me what happened to the little blue engine in this story?" Recall prompts help children in understanding story plot and in describing sequences of events. Recall prompts can be used not only at the end of a book, but also at the beginning of a book when a child has been read that book before.
- **Open-ended prompts**  
These prompts focus on the pictures in books. They work best for books that have rich, detailed illustrations. For example, while looking at a page in a book that the child is familiar with, you might say, "Tell me what's happening in this picture." Open-ended prompts help children increase their expressive fluency and attend to detail.
- **Wh- prompts**  
These prompts usually begin with what, where, when, why, and how questions. Like open-ended prompts, wh- prompts focus on the pictures in books. For example, you might say, "What's the name of this?" while pointing to an object in the book. Wh- questions teach children new vocabulary.
- **Distancing prompts**  
These ask children to relate the pictures or words in the book they are reading to experiences outside the book. For example, while looking at a book with a picture of animals on a farm, you might say something like, "Remember when we went to the animal park last week. Which of these animals did we see there?" Distancing prompts help children form a bridge between books and the

real world, as well as helping with verbal fluency, conversational abilities, and narrative skills.

Distancing prompts and recall prompts are more difficult for children than completion, open-ended, and wh- prompts. Frequent use of distancing and recall prompts should be limited to four- and five-year-olds

Virtually all children's books are appropriate for dialogic reading. The best books have rich detailed pictures, or are interesting to your child. Always follow your child's interest when sharing books with your child.

### **A technique that works**

Dialogic reading works. Children who have been read to dialogically are substantially ahead of children who have been read to traditionally on tests of language development. Children can jump ahead by several months in just a few weeks of dialogic reading. We have found these effects with hundreds of children in areas as geographically different as New York, Tennessee, and Mexico, in settings as varied as homes, preschools, and daycare centers, and with children from economic backgrounds ranging from poverty to affluence.

Dialogic reading is just children and adults having a conversation about a book. Children will enjoy dialogic reading more than traditional reading as long as you mix-up your prompts with straight reading, vary what you do from reading to reading, and follow the child's interest. Keep it light. Don't push children with more prompts than they can handle happily. *Keep it fun.*

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