

What Do Children Need to Know to Start School?

What do you think children need to know before they go to school?

Many adults think children should be able to say their ABC's, count to 20, and know their colors and shapes before they start school. If you talk with a kindergarten teacher, you may hear a very different answer.

Kindergarten teachers say that what children need most are the social and emotional skills to begin school. These are things like being able to take turns, to control themselves, to work in a group, to make friends, to talk with teachers

and other children. Sad to say, studies show that many children start school without these skills.

Here's a list of simple things that caregivers and parents can do to help children get ready to start school.

Getting Along with Others

- Make time for children to play with another child or in small groups.
- Help children learn to share with others.
- Teach children to wait for their turn.
- Teach children how to solve problems without hitting others.

Paying Attention

- Read to children and ask questions so they learn to listen.
- Play games and sing songs to help children learn to follow directions (Put your hand on your head, touch your nose, step on the paper, etc.).

Getting Ready to Read

- Read to children every day.
- Show children how to use their fingers to follow words across a page from left to right and top to bottom.
- Look at pictures and ask the child to tell what is happening in the story.

- Play word games with children, such as making up silly words that rhyme or picking out the beginning sounds in words, like "d" in "dog."
- Talk about letters by name and sound.
- Print the child's name and say the letters.
- Play a game with the children to think of all the opposites they know (big-little, over-under, tall-short, etc.).
- Let children play with pencils, crayons, markers, and paper (Remember, scribbling is a first step in learning to write).
- Give children child safety scissors and old magazines to cut out pictures. Cutting builds hand muscles, which are needed for writing.



Getting Ready for Math

- Count fingers and toes, the days in the week, blocks in the truck, etc.
- Give children the chance to use math (Put a plate on the table for each child, put a block in each hole in the box, make sure each child has a piece of paper).
- Have children line up plastic lids or buttons from biggest to smallest.



Colors and Shapes

- Point out simple shapes like square, circle, and triangle. Have the children help you find these shapes around your home.
- Draw silly pictures made from circles, squares, and triangles.
- Play the "I Spy" game. Say, "I spy something green." The children need to guess what it is.
- Give the children old magazines. Ask them to cut out pictures that are red and paste them on paper. Then find green pictures, blue, etc.
- Set out a box of buttons for the children to sort by color. Put all the red buttons in a dish, all the blue in another, etc.
- Make simple patterns and point them out to children, such as a green button, a red button, green, red, etc.

Self Help Skills

- Teach the children to use buttons and zippers to dress themselves.
- Help children learn to use the bathroom and wash their hands without needing adult help.

Help children with the skills they need to start school.

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