

## GETTING READY FOR KINDERGARTEN: START NOW!

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The most important preschool skill is **language**. Talk, listen, explore, sing, play, and read with your child.

Help your child learn concept words like before, next, top, under, middle, forward, first, last, etc. Experience these words with your child so that she understands their physical meanings (crawl under tables, over chairs, and so forth). Emphasize these words when talking (“First, put the napkins on the table. Next, put the fork on the napkin. Third, put the plates in the middle of the placement.”). This builds important math skills and helps your child to be better able to follow classroom directions.

Take your child places and talk about what you both notice. This builds general information and vocabulary, which are important for later learning of science and social studies. Visit museums, zoos, and libraries.

Point out sounds around you. Imitate with your preschooler the sounds of windshield wipers, animals, appliances, and musical instruments. This builds awareness of sounds and helps in the future with learning the sounds of letters.

Read to your child every day and let him choose books he likes. Recorded books are also fun. Point to the words while you read. Reading often helps your child enjoy and look forward to this important skill.

Encourage your child to read (or look at books) just before bedtime to get in the habit of reading daily.

Take your child to story time at the library or bookstore to build a love of language and reading.

**Do not** teach your child letter and number names until they are close to four years of age, unless they express interest and ask, “What is that letter?” Teaching letter names too early is frustrating and may “turn your child off” from pre-reading skills.”

Put magnetic letters on your refrigerator for your child to move and play with. This helps build visual discrimination skills.

Point out common street and store signs (Stop, K-Mart, McDonalds). The first words that children “read” are these common signs.

Look at the newspaper with your child and show her advertisements with common signs in them. This helps your child recognize signs in different places, colors, and so forth.

Encourage your child to draw and write. Have magic markers, crayons, and paints and spend time almost every day drawing and writing. Write your child’s name on his papers and hang them in the house. This helps your child know that his work is important to you and that papers are something to appreciate.

Make a scrapbook of your child’s artwork and papers and with your child put papers in it. This helps build organizational skills.

Help your child put toys away before getting out new ones. Put toys away neatly and don’t just throw them in a box. This helps build organizational skills and neatness.

When your child wants to begin writing real words, write one or two examples for him to trace and when older, copy.

Encourage your child to finish chores before playing or taking breaks. This helps her learn to follow through with tasks and to “work first and play later.”

Have your preschool age child watch Sesame Street and watch it with her from time to time. Encourage her to sing along, answer questions, and really get involved in the program.

Children learn the sounds of letters in kindergarten. You can help with this by emphasizing each sound at home while it is being taught at school. For example, if the class is working on the sound of the letter “B,” try batting balls in into a basket or baking a letter B in bread dough. Such fun activities will help your child associate words, letters, and sounds.

There are fun toys like “See and Say” or “Talk and Match” that build associations between words, objects, and sounds. Computer games like “Millie’s Math House” and “Adventures with Quinn” can be fun for helping teach spatial concepts, color recognition, shape discrimination, counting, and alphabet skills.

During first grade, your child will begin reading words. Take turns reading with your child. Let him pick out books to read, no matter how simple. This shows him that you are interested in his reading and think it is very important. Let him read to his brothers, sisters, and other family members.

With early elementary children, let them tell you short stories. Write them down as they do and put a sentence or two at the bottom of several pieces of paper. Staple these together so that your child has a book. Let him draw pictures to go with it and then help him read it. This helps children understand that reading is “talk written down”

Meet with your child’s teacher often and find out how he is progressing. Ask the teacher about specific things you can do at home to help build and reinforce the skills being worked on in class.

If your child is experiencing difficulty learning school skills and you need more support and assistance helping at home, consider a tutor or a summer program. Ask the resource teacher at your school for names of programs and tutors.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Parent-Teacher Association**

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

### **Connect For Kids**

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

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

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