# **How can I prepare my child for kindergarten?**



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Beginning kindergarten is a huge milestone for you and your child, and you can help prepare him for it in many ways. In kindergarten, children learn more about social and communication skills than academics, so instead of drilling your child in his ABCs and numbers, concentrate more on his ability to cooperate, to talk to and play with others, and to follow directions.

Here are the best ways to get your child ready for his first big year of school.

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## **Focus on your child's social life**

For most of your child's school day, he will relate to and work with the other children, learning to collaborate on projects and share toys. Children who are comfortable working in groups do the best. If your child has been in preschool, he's probably already adept in this area. If he hasn't, then consider enrolling him in a group activity such as a gymnastics or music class. You can also sign him up for a part-time camp program the summer before kindergarten begins.

Try to encourage him to participate in group activities whenever they occur, such as during birthday parties. If you know he's reluctant to join in games like "Pin the Tail on the Donkey" or "Musical Chairs," practice these at home with him. You can also take him to playgrounds, pools, libraries, and other neighborhood places where he can meet other children and learn to play with them.

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## **Boost his self-awareness**

Besides learning to be aware of others, children who begin kindergarten need to be aware of themselves. Help him memorize basic information about himself such as the correct spelling of his name, his age, address, and phone number. He should also be able to name his various body parts. This way, he won't be caught off guard when children or teachers ask him these questions. If he has difficulty memorizing rote facts, such as his phone number, adapt it to the melody of a song he knows.

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## **Expand his mind**

Informally begin to teach your child about numbers and letters as you go about your daily lives. While unpacking grocery bags, for instance, you can count the items and ask him to count with you. You can ask him to put your cans in size order, or to alphabetize them if he already knows some letter sequences. You can ask him to count how many windows are in the house, or to find all the objects that begin with a specific letter. Knowing colors is also useful, so ask him to identify colors on his clothes, cereal boxes, etc. In these casual ways, your child will pick up all the knowledge he needs to begin kindergarten.

Devote some time to teaching concepts as well. Understanding the difference between words like "same" and "different" or "more" and "less" will help a child express his thoughts. Another important tool is the art of describing and making distinctions; this is why the characters on Sesame Street play "One of these things is not like the other..." You can do the same at home. Put three oranges and a banana in a bowl, and ask him to choose the one that's different. Discuss "place" words, or prepositions, such as "under," "above," "beside," and "through," and words that describe time, such as "before" and "after."

See more [activities that build reading skills](https://www.babycenter.com/0_fun-activities-for-beginning-readers_67030.bc) and [activities that build math skills](https://www.babycenter.com/0_fun-activities-to-promote-math-skills-kindergarten_66998.bc).

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## **Encourage nimbleness**

Before children can learn to write, they have to develop their fine motor skills. To help, give your child small jobs to do around the house that encourage him to use the muscles in his arms and fingers, such as opening mail, sorting silverware, stirring batter, and tying shoes.

You can also buy thick markers or pieces of chalk and suggest that your child spend some time drawing — whether on a big pad of paper or on the driveway. Playing with fluid materials like water and sand will help his coordination, too. You can also buy him a set of kid-sized tools and ask him to make small repairs around the house — tightening screws and hammering nails, for instance.

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## **Surround him with words**

There are many pre-kindergarten workbooks available, but most experts advise against using them unless your child specifically asks for them. If he doesn't, then just nurture his love of language whenever and however you can. Read to him frequently during the day, and encourage him to make up his own stories as he looks at pictures. You can also ask your child to tell you a story for you to write down; then you can read it back to him, and he can "read" it back to you. Read billboards, TV schedules, magazines, shopping lists — whatever is at hand. Visit libraries and bookstores regularly.

Get more tips on [raising a child who loves reading](https://www.babycenter.com/0_beginning-readers-how-to-raise-a-child-who-loves-to-read_72346.bc).

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## **Tour the school**

You can also make sure that your child is familiar with the school building. Many schools hold an orientation for pre-kindergartners, but feel free to supplement that visit with more informal ones. Take your child to visit the school at different times during the day so he can see children getting on and off the bus, and playing during recess. Let him play in the school playground on the weekends. One morning, you can also walk with him to the bus stop he will use so he can see children waiting for the bus and watch them board. This will help him feel more comfortable with the day-to-day routine of going to school.

Source:

<https://www.babycenter.com/0_how-can-i-prepare-my-child-for-kindergarten_67245.bc>