



Preschool Readiness

Alicia Lawlor— MA. Ed.
Preschool Consultant
Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District

Preparing Your Child for Preschool

Adjusting to preschool can be tough for any child, even one who's been in daycare for a while. You can help ease your child's transition to preschool with these ideas and activities.

Plan more social activities

All preschool children have to get along with other kids. If your child hasn't spent much time in a group with other children, then activities such as sharing, taking turns, and playing cooperatively can be very difficult.



Help your child get used to being part of a group by arranging playdates with one or two peers or enrolling him in a music or tumbling class.

Give him a sense of what to expect

It's the rare child who isn't at least a little anxious about starting preschool. Resist the temptation to say things like "It'll be the most fun you've ever had," or "There's nothing to be afraid of," and never belittle your child's fears or concerns. Instead, help calm his fears with information.



Talk to him about what to expect when he gets to school — where he'll be going, what he'll be doing, and who will be in class with him. Before school begins, visit the classroom together

at least once, preferably when other children and his future teacher(s) are there.

You can also read stories about starting school.

Come up with a good-bye ritual

If this is the first time your child will be away from you, he may worry that you're not coming back, or that you'll get lost and won't be able to find your way back to the school to pick him up at the end of the day.



Invent a special parting ritual — such as a high-five, or saying something like, "I'll be back to get you soon, long before we see the moon" — that you do each time you drop him off.

During the first few days, allow extra time to get him ready and out the door in the morning, too. The more calm things are at home, the easier the separation will be.

And though you might be tempted to sneak out without so much as a wave when you drop him off, don't do it. He will only be more distressed when he realizes you're gone.

Instead, make a point of saying good-bye. Don't drag it out or let on that you might be upset, too. Just do it matter-of-factly and confidently and he'll learn to do the same.

Read to your child every day

Most preschool classes have at least one reading period each day. Setting aside at least 15 minutes a day for reading time will make this a familiar ritual when school begins. Children who don't have early experiences with books often have difficulty learning to read later.



Since preschoolers don't read independently, they need to learn to listen. Reading aloud to your child is a great way to help him develop listening skills. Stories with rhythm are particularly engaging, so look for books that repeat phrases.

When he starts remembering the phrases, ask him to "read" with you. For instance, if you read *The Three Little Pigs*, after the wolf says, "Little pig, let me come in," let your child fill in the next line, "Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin."

Your child will also learn to predict the outcome of a story in preschool. To help him prepare for this, you can stop midway through a reading and question him about what he thinks will happen next, or how he thinks the story will end.

Practice listening skills

Preschool teachers often encourage their busy young pupils to sit still and listen.

Doing simple mazes and connect-the-dot pictures will also help your child develop be-



You can help your child prepare for this request by occasionally asking him to sit quietly and close his eyes, and then ask him to tell you all the different sounds he hears. Talk about what's making the sounds and where the sounds are coming from.

In preschool, children also learn to listen and follow directions that involve more than one step. Start asking your child to do a series of things, such as take his shoes to his room and put them in the closet. Or go to the bathroom and wash his hands and then come and help you set the dinner table.

You can also play games that require your child to listen to directions, solve problems, and take turns. For instance, play **I Spy** in the car or on walks around your neighborhood.

Give hints about something you see, "I spy with my little eye something that is...tall." Your child has to ask you questions about the object until he guesses what it is.

Simon Says is another good listening-and-direction-following game.



Nurture the artist in residence

Creating art — whether it's finger-painting or molding clay — helps preschoolers develop the visual and fine motor skills they need to write. Keep paper, paints, crayons, and other art supplies on hand and encourage your child to create whenever he wants.



Other Skills for Preschool Readiness:

Practice Communication— encourage your child to express herself, especially in situations that may be frustrating for your child like opening a jar or a social disagreement.

Making Choices— help your child make choices in play and everyday life. For example, let him choose his own clothing or what vegetable the family will have with dinner.

Follow a Schedule— consistent routines help children feel more secure

and know what to expect. Preschool classrooms generally follow a set daily schedule. Develop a routine at home to help children adjust to being on a schedule.

Build Independence— put your child in situations where they must rely on themselves such as finding someone to play with at the playground or ordering their own food at a restaurant.

Calm Themselves— preschool is sure to be filled with experiences that may

be frustrating at times. Teach your child techniques to help her calm down when she becomes frustrated. Counting to 10, taking deep breaths, or walking away from the situation are some that work well.



What your child will learn in preschool:

- *Social and Emotional Development— your child will learn to feel secure and will be able to spend time away from you while building trusting relationships with adults outside the home. Preschoolers learn to build friendships, share and resolve conflicts and be part of a group.*
- *Choices— children will be given the opportunity to make their own choice and pursue their own interests, thus fostering a sense of independence and identity.*
- *Self-sufficiency and independence —as preschoolers engage in productive activities during the day they gain a sense of independence, confidence, and self-esteem.*
- *Group and classroom dynamics— preschoolers learn to take part in group activities, participating in circle time and being focused and attentive when the teacher or peer*

is speaking. This includes turn taking and speaking in front of peers.

- *Language and Cognitive Development- preschool helps expand language skills as they talk, listen, negotiate games with their peers, and take part in imaginative play. They will participate in hands-on activities, solve problems, be encouraged to ask questions, and express opinions.*
- *Explore Curiosity and Imagination— the teacher will work to encourage your child’s natural creativity and interest in the world through pretend play and environmental exploration. Imaginative play is also a great way for a child to learn to get along and work productively with peers.*
- *Math and Literacy Skills— a variety of activities provide fundamental skills your child will build*

upon as she grows. These could include sorting, counting, exploring the alphabet and letter sounds, reading, singing, rhyming, learning shapes and patterns, drawing, writing, and graphing.

- *Motor Skills— whether its running and jumping, climbing and tumbling, stacking blocks, stringing beads, or cutting with scissors, your child’s preschool experience will help him develop his fine and gross motor skills and improve hand-eye coordination and balance.*
- *Most children will find preschool not only challenging, exciting, and full of learning experiences, but also just plain fun!*

