

A Parent's Guide to Preparing Your Child for School

From the National Education Association

www.nea.org

What is School Readiness?

It is never too early to start providing the kinds of experiences that will help your child enter school ready to succeed. "School readiness" refers to the academic, independence, communication, and social skills children need to do well in school. Getting your child ready for school requires you to spend time reading, talking, and playing with your child.

Academic Readiness

Before entering kindergarten, children should have basic knowledge of themselves, their families, and the world around them. Through play and interactions with caring adults, children can come to school with many skills that teachers can build upon. To get your child academically ready for school, you should:

- Read to your child daily and talk about what you've read.
- Visit the library. Check out books and attend story times.
- Sing rhyming songs and finger plays.
- Put your child's name on their clothing and toys to help him or her recognize their name in print.
- Encourage your child to write his or her name.
- Help your child learn basic colors by pointing and naming objects like "green trees," "red apples," "blue coats".
- Let your child scribble, draw and write, cut and paste.

- Sing the alphabet song with your child and provide letter magnets or other toys that will help him/her begin to recognize the letters of the alphabet.
- Take your child to the zoo, parks, the grocery store, the post office, and the pet shop. Talk about the sights and sounds of your day.
- Make time for your child to sing, dance, climb, jump, run and ride tri-cycles or bikes.
- Choose child care that promotes learning with well - planned, fun and interesting activities.

Social Readiness

Social readiness is as important as academic readiness. Being able to get along with other children, follow directions, take turns and say "goodbye" to parents are skills that kindergarten teachers hope to see from incoming children. To get your child socially ready for school, you should:

- Set rules and give consequences for breaking them.
- Have regular routines for mealtime and bedtime.
- Encourage your child to play with and talk to other children.
- Encourage your child to finish difficult or frustrating tasks once they have begun them.
- Encourage your child to consider the feelings of others.
- Model and discuss positive ways for your child to express his or her feel-

ings.

- Discourage hitting, biting, screaming and other negative behaviors.
- Kiss and hug your child several times a day.

Independence

When children complete basic self-help tasks such as zipping their coats or tying their shoes, they feel a great sense of pride. Independence builds confidence and self esteem. In school, children will be expected to do many things on their own. To make sure your child is independent in school, you should:

- Buy shoes and clothing that are easy for children to buckle, zip and fasten on their own.
- Let your child get dressed and put on shoes by him or herself.
- Let your child do simple chores like setting the table at mealtimes or cleaning up toys after playing.
- Encourage independent toileting and hand washing.
- Let your child work independently on activities such as completing puzzles.

Communication Skills

Listening and speaking are the first steps to reading and writing in the preschool years. Through conversations with parents, teachers and friends children learn about the people, places and objects that they will later read and write about. It is through speaking that young children tell us what they know and understand about the world. To make sure that your child can communicate his or her thoughts and feelings in school, you should:

- Have regular conversations with your child.
- Encourage your child to listen and re-

spond to others when they speak,

- Answer your child's questions, even if the answer is "no".
- Help your child learn and use new words.
- Explore language through singing, rhyming, songs and chants.
- Model the language you want your child to use.
- Write notes to your child.
- Help your child dictate letters to family and friends.

For more useful Parent Guides go to www.nea.org/parents

- * A Parent's Guide to Raising Ready Readers
- * A Parent's Guide to Helping Your Child Learn to Read
- * A Parent's Guide to Raising Scientifically Literate Children
- * A Parent's Guide to Helping Your Child with Today's Math

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