

What should my child know before kindergarten?



Starting kindergarten is such an exciting and important time! Parents naturally want their children to have a terrific first experience at school. While teachers certainly don't expect children to come to school knowing everything already, the first couple of weeks will go much smoother if the child has a solid foundation.

Students who are entering kindergarten should be able to:

1. Verbalize Wants and Needs

Children who greet one another with a "Hello," who ask their teachers for what they need, who negotiate well with peers, and who speak up for themselves will do well socially in kindergarten.

2. Write Their Name

Ideally, the children will **write their first names** from left to right with a capital first letter and the rest lower case. At the very minimum, though, they need to be able to write some form of their first name that is recognizable to the teacher.

3. Handle a Book

Not read it, but rather be able to locate the cover, hold it the right direction, turn the pages, and locate the text. The one and only way to teach this skill is to **read to your child** every single day. Have books in every room and in the car. Make sure that your child sees you reading your own books, too. Read, read, read!

4. Get Themselves Dressed

Kindergartners need to be able to put on their own coats and shoes and button their own pants. If your child hasn't mastered shoe tying at the beginning of the year, don't panic! Keep practicing, but be sure to send him to school in velcro shoes (or something similar) that he can do himself.

5. Be Independent in the Bathroom

Kindergarten teachers are not able to accompany their students to the bathroom. The students must be able to handle their own pants (no overalls or onesies!), wipe themselves, flush, and wash their own hands. Start practicing early! This one's important!

6. Use Scissors, Glue and Crayons

There's a lot of coloring, cutting and pasting going on in kindergarten. The children who already know how to use their school supplies at the beginning of the year get a big gold star.

7. Hold a Pencil Correctly

Students should be able to hold a pencil with a correct grip and use it to make deliberate, dark marks. For example, they should be able to trace a circle and a straight line effectively.

8. Identify Some Letters and Letter Sounds

Starting with the letters of their name, children who are entering kindergarten should know the names of many of the letters. It's helpful if they also know that letters make sounds, but not imperative that they know what each one is.

9. Count to 10

Kindergartners should be able to rote count (1-2-3-4...) through 10 and also be able to count a set of objects (4 crackers) with good one-to-one correspondence (saying one number for one object).

10. Rhyme

There is research that shows that children who have good phonological awareness skills (Rhyming is one of them!) tend to become better readers. We will work on naming specific rhymes and generating rhyming words in kindergarten, but it is great for students to come in already having played with the sounds of words before. Play with rhyming words with your child. Sing nursery rhymes and rhyming songs. Read books that have rhymes.

11. Separate from their Parents

Separation anxiety is very common among children who are just beginning school. Kindergartners who are happy and comfortable in the school setting are off to a great start. You can practice this by dropping students off for day camps or at friends' houses for playdates.

