

Getting School Ready In Minnesota

**“I want to be ready
for kindergarten.”**



**“How can kindergarten
be ready for me?”**

A guide for parents, family members,
caregivers, and teachers of children who will be
attending kindergarten in Minnesota.

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In 2003, the Northland Foundation and the five other Minnesota Initiative Foundations launched the Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative. Together, they are developing grassroots coalitions, made up of diverse community sectors, to strengthen local resources for young children and their families across the state.



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Minnesota Initiative Foundations

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Southwest Minnesota Foundation - swifoundation.org

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Ready 4 K - www.ready4K.org

Credits

The **Getting School Ready In Minnesota Guide** is based on a publication developed by the Getting School Ready Project (Seattle/King County, Washington).

**If children could tell us,
here's what they might say:**



**“I need adults to work together to help
me get school ready.”**

**How are you already helping?
Read on to see.**

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Getting School Ready In Minnesota

- **What do children need to be ready for kindergarten?**
- **What can families and caregivers do to prepare their children for kindergarten, while the school is getting ready for them?**



Children learn through a variety of activities and experiences. While there is no perfect formula to know when a child is ready for kindergarten, this guide can be used by parents, caregivers, and teachers to make good decisions in preparing a young child for kindergarten. Checklists and helpful hints are provided in this guide to help you

prepare a child to be a confident and successful learner.

Children benefit when their families participate and are involved in their learning and development. And yet, ALL – parents, caregivers, schools, and communities – contribute to the well being of children.

Social and Emotional Skills

Checklist of general expectations for children

Children entering kindergarten should be able to take care of themselves and their personal things and work independently.

- Hang coat on a hook
- Put on and take off shoes
- Handle toileting needs
- Pick up toys and put them in appropriate places
- Follow a daily routine
- Separate from caregiver and adjust to new settings
- Choose activities independently

Children entering kindergarten should learn to make friends, solve problems with others, show empathy, and negotiate.

- Join one or more children in play
- Interact easily with familiar adults
- Begin to recognize and respond to others' emotions
- Use words and phrases, such as *"Can I play with you?"* or *"Please stop. I don't like that."*

Children entering kindergarten should have a growing sense of self to take risks as a learner.

- Show increasing self direction and independence
- Begin to have a sense of family and tradition

Social and Emotional Skill-Builders

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers



“I need to feel excited and comfortable about starting kindergarten.”

Things **you can** do:

- Let me know you're excited about me starting kindergarten.
- Give me a chance to visit my school before I start.
- Listen to my thoughts and ideas about school.
- Help me pretend I'm in school.

“I need to know what kindergarten will be like.”

Things **you can** do:

- Teach me to follow directions by giving me simple steps.
- Help me to learn how to share with other children, stand in line, wait my turn, and sit in a group.

“I need to feel good about myself.”

Things **you can** do:

- Pay attention to me and listen to my ideas.
- Help me feel good about things I can do.
- Praise me for my strengths.
- Be patient and let me develop at my own pace.
- Teach me that all my feelings are okay, but not all my actions are okay.
- Teach me ways to calm myself when I get frustrated.

“I need to get along with others.”

Things **you can** do:

- Show me ways to make new friends.
- Help me understand how I can be friends with children who are different than me.
- Teach me to use words when someone hurts my feelings, such as *“Please stop. That hurts my feelings.”*

“I need to know how to talk and listen to others.”

Things **you can** do:

- Talk with me about things I find interesting.
- Teach me how to know when it's my turn to speak and when I need to listen.
- Teach me to use words to describe my feelings and needs, and when to use them.



Word Skills

Checklist of general expectations for children

Children entering kindergarten should be able to listen to stories and have conversations.

- Listen and understand stories, conversations, and directions
- Start conversations
- Ask and respond to questions
- Recognize rhyming words
- Use a growing vocabulary

Children entering kindergarten should be able to recognize their names, interact with stories, re-tell stories, and make guesses using pictures.

- Recognize and name some letters of the alphabet, especially those in their own name
- Guess what will happen next in a story using pictures as a guide
- Begin to show an interest and understanding in written language by asking *"What does that say?"*



Children entering kindergarten should be able to hold a pencil, write their names, and express themselves using pictures.

- Use scribbles, shapes, and pictures to represent thoughts or ideas
- Begin to copy or write their own name

Word Skill-Builders

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers

"I need to be familiar with words and books."

Things **you can** do:

- Teach me new words.
- Show me words and symbols in my language and the sounds they make.
- Read to me, take me to the library, and bring me books and magazines.
- Ask me questions about stories to help me understand their meaning.
- Sing songs and teach me rhymes.
- Write down my words or stories as I tell you.

Number Skills

Checklist of general expectations for children

Children entering kindergarten should be able to count, sort, classify, and create patterns.

- Count objects, such as cups, when setting the table
- Sort objects by color, size, or shape

Children entering kindergarten should be able to identify colors and shapes around them.

- Describe simple shapes
- Identify colors
- Play matching games

Children entering kindergarten should use language to describe math concepts.

- Use language to describe time, such as *“today or tomorrow”*
- Describe people or objects using *“big, little, short, tall, long,”* etc.



Number Skill-Builders

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers

“I need to know shapes, sizes, and colors.”

Things **you can** do:

- Give me things to sort by shape, size, or color.
- Help me find and name shapes and colors all around me.

“I need to learn to count and understand that numbers have meaning.”

Things **you can** do:

- Help me play counting games.
- Let me count things at home.
- Show me how numbers are used around me.



Learning Skills

Checklist of general expectations for children

Children entering kindergarten should have experiences through play to become confident learners.

- Be flexible and imaginative in play
- Play for a period of time
- Stay with a task when faced with a challenge
- Use new ideas in solving problems or exploring objects
- Try to figure things out
- Seek and/or accept help when needed
- Apply knowledge and experiences to new situations

Learning Skill-Builders

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers

“I need to be excited about learning.”

Things **you can** do:

- Encourage me to explore with my senses - to see, touch, hear, smell, and taste.
- Give me fun, exciting choices.
- Give me lots of time to figure things out.

“I need to learn to try things and keep trying even when it seems hard.”

Things **you can** do:

- Give me activities that hold my interest.
- Help me explore and try new activities.
- Help me learn step by step.
- Teach me that making mistakes is part of learning.
- Show me different ways to understand my world.

Safety and Health Skill-Builders

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers

“I need to be safe and feel safe.”

Things **you can** do:

- Help me practice saying my name, address, and phone number.
- Teach me about crossing the street and watching for cars.
- Teach me about not talking to strangers and who is a safe person to ask for help.



“I need to have bathroom and self-help skills.”

Things **you can** do:

- Teach me the words to tell other grown-ups when I need to go to the bathroom, or when I am feeling sick or hurt.
- Help me learn to go to the bathroom and wash my hands by myself.
- Teach me to dress and tie my shoes.
- Encourage me to try things before I ask my teacher for help.

“I need to have my basic needs met before I come to school each day.”

Things **you can** do:

- Make sure I eat healthy food, get plenty of rest, and dress for the weather.
- Take me to all my medical check-ups and make sure I see the doctor and the dentist before I start school.
- Teach me how to brush my teeth.

“I need to be able to use my hands and fingers to do small tasks.”

Things **you can** do:

- Help me to pick up, hold and use pencils, crayons, markers, paintbrushes, and scissors.
- Help me make things with blocks, paper, cardboard, and tape.



“I need to be able to use my arms, legs, and body to make big movements.”

Things **you can** do:

- Encourage me to run, jump, climb, dance, and move to music as I am able.
- Give me time each day to play outdoors.
- Encourage me to play and **limit my TV and computer time.**



Support For My Family, Culture, and Language

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers

“I need to feel good about my family and culture, and to learn about other cultures.”

Things **you and my school can** do:

- Show me books, tell me stories, and sing me songs about my culture and other cultures.
- Take me to places that teach me about my culture and other cultures.
- Use the language(s) I know to help me understand and learn.

“I need my school to welcome my family.”

Things **my school can** do:

- Put up welcoming signs in the language I speak at home.
- Learn about my community and culture before I arrive.
- Let my family know who to go to with ideas or questions.
- Invite us to participate in the school, classroom, and PTA.

“My family and I want all the grown-ups at my school to know and respect my culture, my learning style, and my family.”

Things **my school can** do:

- Understand that school may be my first introduction to cultures and languages other than my own.
- Let me know if my classroom teacher and others at school can speak my home language.
- Invite my family and me to share information with my teacher and classmates about my family or culture.
- Support my family culture by putting me in a class with other children who share my home language and culture.
- Let me know that speaking my language strengthens all my language skills.

Communication Among the Grown-ups in My Life

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers

“My school experience will be best if my early childhood educators, kindergarten teachers, school staff, parents, and family members work together to help me learn.”

Things **you and my school can** do:

- Share with each other.
- Share things happening in my life that might affect how I feel and act.
- Participate in Early Childhood Screening.
- Find out about any special abilities and needs I have.
- Learn about school and community services.
- Volunteer at school.



“I need my family to know what is happening at my school, what I am learning, and what I am expected to know.”



Ensuring that all young children thrive and have a healthy life of learning, achieving, and succeeding.

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