



Prekindergarten

Family Engagement Guide

Congratulations! You are preparing your child for kindergarten. Your child may have been in day care or preschool and is familiar with organized activities in a classroom. Or, this may be the first time that they have been away from home for an extended period. While some children take a while to adjust to a school setting, one thing is true for most youngsters this age—they love learning!

Your prekindergartner will learn many new things this year. They will begin learning the foundations of reading, writing, and important math concepts, all while engaging in play, exploration, and hands-on activities.

While learning foundational skills is important, your child will also learn important social skills and how to be a student. For many prekindergartners, this year is their first experience in a structured classroom environment. Building skills such as taking turns, sharing, and learning classroom routines will prepare your child for many wonderful school years to come.

There are many changes ahead, but there is one constant: you will continue to be the most important teacher in your child's life. This guide will give you some ideas for helping your child learn, including tips for getting organized and learning on the go throughout your busy day. Some of these practices will be new, and some will be familiar. Many will serve you well for years to come!



Top 10 Things Your Prekindergartner Needs to Know

- 1 How to recognize their name
- 2 Letters of the alphabet
- 3 Manners for listening to read-alouds
- 4 Ways to ask and answer questions about a story or book
- 5 Basic understanding that written words correspond to spoken words
- 6 Words in English are read from left to right and from top to bottom
- 7 Rhyme patterns in songs and poetry can be fun to recite
- 8 Numbers 1–20
- 9 Basic shapes, such as circle, square, and triangle
- 10 How to sort objects by color, size, and shape

Pre-K at a Glance

What to Read

Invite your child to help you build a home library. Have them tell you about their interests and start there. Ask their teachers, your neighbors, and your librarian for their favorites, too.

Here are some great books for your preschooler:

- ✓ *I Can Do It Myself* by Valerie Nelson
- ✓ *Just Like Me* by Vanessa Brantley-Newton
- ✓ *Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity* by Mo Willems
- ✓ *No, David!* by David Shannon
- ✓ *Olivia* by Ian Falconer
- ✓ *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz
- ✓ *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle



Here are some ideas for how to find books:

- borrow from school or a public library
- swap books with other families
- shop bookstores or online sales
- hunt for bargain books at garage sales

Colors All Around

Review colors with your child. Practice spotting colors in the world around you!



Shapes

Review shapes with your child. See if your child can find everyday items and describe their shapes.



triangle



circle



square



New Readers Ahead!

Prekindergartners are developing their literacy skills. They are learning to connect spoken and written language. Introduce your child to pictures, books, and magazines to help them understand this important connection.

Print-Rich Environment

Your prekindergartner may already recognize many words. Some words may be seen at home and others are found in the community around them. For example, many children can recognize their favorite store names and other common signs.

Labels

Label closets, cubbies, and bookshelves with the names of items that are stored there. Give your child the responsibility of putting things away according to labels.

Traffic Signs

When you're driving, read the various road signs as you approach them. If your child is still learning the letters of the alphabet, ask them to identify the first letter of a sign and its sound.

Food Labels

Have your child help you by grabbing the correct can or box from the pantry when you say the name. They should focus on recognizing the first letter and sound.



Phonics Play

Every time you read aloud or talk about letters and words, you are laying the foundation for phonics instruction. Learning letters and sounds will help your child become a successful reader.

Words Are Funny!

Find ways to play with words by mixing up sounds or sharing tongue twisters, such as *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers...*

Everyday Phonics

Blend routine activities with phonics play. Start by saying, "Put on something that begins with the same sound as sand." (*socks*) You can make this more challenging over time by using ending sounds or middle sounds.

Read Aloud

Read aloud a variety of books and stories to your child. Read with humor and expression!

Safe and Cozy

Take time to enjoy reading with your child. Reading a story can be relaxing and rewarding for adults and children alike. Your child will feel at ease while learning new words, language patterns, reading rules, and tons of information about the world.

Take Turns

Invite your child to read a story to you! Your child can describe the pictures, recall predictable patterns in the story, and practice turning the pages. Doing so will support your child's awareness of print, oral language, and vocabulary development.



The Write Stuff



Prepare your prekindergartner to learn to write.

Fine Motor Fine-Tune

Children do a lot of gripping, grasping, turning, and pulling. Have fun playing while strengthening your child's hands and increasing their coordination.

Variety Is the Spice of Life

Create a kid-friendly author's area stocked with a collection of writing supplies. Include the necessities (pencils and paper) and the fun stuff (pencil grips, markers, envelopes, crayons). Change items in the author's area often! Your child will enjoy the novelty.

Touchy Letters

Have your child trace letters and numbers in different substances, such as sand or shaving cream. This will help your child practice forming letters in a fun way. See if they can tell you the sound of the letter while they are tracing. This will reinforce their letter-sound knowledge, too!



Letters Everywhere!

Learning the names, shapes, and sounds represented by letters is very important in prekindergarten. Strengthen learning outside of school with these ideas.

Eat Your Art

Make safe-to-eat "paint" by adding a few drops of food coloring to one-fourth cup of milk. Have your child paint a letter on their bread before toasting and eating it.

Body Spelling

Have your prekindergartner practice spelling letters with movement. Call out a letter, and have your child form that letter with their body. For example, to "body spell" the letter *T*, they can stand tall with their arms out to the sides.



Be a Storyteller

While your child is learning to write letters and spell beginning words, it is important to give them opportunities to tell stories. You can engage your child in storytelling in many ways!

Draw a Story

Before your child can write sentences, they can tell stories through drawings. Ask your child to create a story by drawing the characters, setting, and events. Then, ask your child to tell you what their story is about. This will teach your child that writing helps convey meaning. It will also develop their oral language.

Keep a Journal

Prepare a special journal for your child for their stories. Encourage them to label their pictures by using letters and sounds that they know.



Math Counts



If you have ever cut your prekindergartner's sandwiches into triangles, you've been teaching geometry. You are teaching one-to-one correspondence each time you say, "Take two more bites. One...two." Your home is a great place to practice math concepts with fun activities.

Math Is Everywhere!

These activities will help you reinforce math concepts on the go.

Counting Songs

Sing counting songs to your child, such as "Six Little Ducks" or "The Ants Go Marching." You can find lyrics for these and dozens of other children's songs online.

License Plates

Have your child look for numbers on license plates. Ask them to search in order starting with the number 1.

Market Math

The grocery store is a perfect place to reinforce math. Your child can count cans of soup on a shelf or identify the heavier of two fruits you are buying. Help them to recognize numbers in prices, weights, and product codes.



Math in Action

Does your child pour water from one container to another during bath time? Do they compare their height to a sibling's height? Do they complain when a sibling has a larger cookie? That's math in action!

Counting Cafe

Be sure to have your prekindergartner help you prepare meals. Scooping out one-half cup of flour puts the fun into the fundamentals of math. Have your child help you count scoops, look for numbers in recipes, and count servings.

Math Books

Books with math themes can inspire learning in your home. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* includes sizing, counting, and comparison. Visit your library for other ideas, such as *Roll Over! A Counting Song* by Merle Peek and *One Monkey Too Many* by Jackie French Koller.



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Time to Investigate Science

Young children are naturally curious. Take advantage of this curiosity and go outside together to explore nature.



Listen

Walk with your child to a favorite spot and sit quietly. Record the sounds you hear on your phone or write them in a journal. Use both pictures and words in the journal. Talk with your child about the sounds and what they think is making each sound.

Collect

Help your child collect rocks, leaves, soil, flowers, and insects. Talk about how things are the same and how they are different. Have your child sort the items based on their attributes.

Touch

Touch and describe things that are smooth and rough, soft and hard, and round and flat. How can you tell that something is smooth? What does it feel like? Encourage your child to use descriptive words. Introduce them to new ways to describe various objects. This will expand their vocabulary.



Social Studies in the World

Prekindergartners learn that their community is more than their immediate family. They are beginning to make new friends. They are fascinated with people, such as community workers, whom they observe or encounter. Encourage a deeper understanding of people and their roles with these activities.

Community Helpers

Teach your child about community helpers as you walk or drive around. They might be curious about the crossing guard, mail carrier, or bus driver. Talk with your child about how each helper makes a difference in your community.

Scrapbook

Create a scrapbook together that documents special days, outings, family events, and celebrations. Include unique family traditions. Look back on special memories that you had together.

New Friends

Your child may have one or two special friends. Talk with your child about what makes that person such a close friend. Then, discuss with your child how they can be a friend to others.



Beyond School

Many prekindergartners still benefit from afternoon naps. You may notice that your child is very tired after the first few days of school! Others have lots of energy and are already developing specific interests. Talk with your child and consider starting some after-school activities.



Sports

Your recreation center, sports centers, or local organizations may offer ballet, swimming lessons, gymnastics, and a variety of team sports. This is a wonderful time to learn about cooperation and teamwork while developing motor skills and learning something new.

Singing

Look for classes at art or music centers that explore singing, making instruments, and rhythmic movement. Your prekindergartner is likely singing a lot at school. Extend that learning into after-school time!

Something New

If your community doesn't offer the right class for your child, consider working with other families to form one or two groups, sharing the responsibility. You might start a club for children who love puzzles, dogs, or dressing up.



Everyday Education

Learning can happen anywhere. Take advantage of your time together and turn moments into learning opportunities for your child.



Favorites

Play the Favorites game on the road! Begin by asking each person in the car to identify their favorite color. Pass the turn to another to ask for a favorite video game, board game, ice cream flavor, book, movie, and so on.

Big-Kid Words

Practice math concepts any time with your prekindergartner. Use colors and shapes to describe objects around the house, and ask your child to find and bring them to you (dark gray rectangular remote control, extra-large burgundy bowl). Use proper mathematical language when possible; your prekindergartner can learn it!

Deep Conversations

Your child's vocabulary is growing at an amazing rate, and conversations are a great way to extend vocabulary development. Talk with your child about their day, their favorite activities, or something new they learned.

Free Play

Don't underestimate the value of unstructured play. Your child is trying new things each day. They need down time to rest, process feelings, pretend, explore, and be fully unique.



Supporting Your Prekindergartner

A Good Night's Sleep

Having an early bedtime so your child gets enough sleep is crucial to your child's health.

- **Routine**—Create a routine with the same bedtime, lighting, and temperature each night.
- **Relax**—Make it a relaxing time without screens.
- **Read**—Read aloud a favorite book.

Make It Fun!

Young children love learning cool stuff and having fun! Play with your prekindergartner while doing daily activities.

- **Games**—Use simple games when you are in the car, such as saying, "I'm going to say three words. You tell me which one begins with the *m* sound (keep your lips together, like you ate something delicious): sit, mop, pan."
- **Songs**—Use cooking time to sing favorite children's songs, such as "The Wheels on the Bus." See if your child can identify rhyming words! Look for child-focused programs on video streaming services you use.
- **Move Your Body**—Create a sound-and-movement pattern for your child to repeat, such as clap-stomp clap-stomp.



Keep the Conversation Going

Communication is key!

- **Open-Ended Questions**—Ask your prekindergartner easy-to-answer, open-ended questions, such as, "What was one of your favorite things you did at school today?"
- **School Staff**—Your child's teacher is there to help and is part of your child's educational team. Ask for book recommendations and extracurricular suggestions.
- **Community Groups**—Look in social media groups for other parents of young learners or neighborhood play groups. You might find something for your child, and you could find invaluable support for yourself as a caregiver.



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