

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Cormier School & Early Learning

Doing these simple things sets your child up to do well in school

Preschool is the exciting start of your child's academic career. Your support for learning now and in the years to come will help your child succeed and achieve in school.

To provide a learning boost:

- **Talk with your child** about why education is important. Discuss ways it has made a difference in your life. Show that it's something your family values by prioritizing regular attendance.
- **Fuel your child** for learning with breakfast. Wake your preschooler up in time to start the day with a healthy meal, at home or at school.
- **Encourage and model reading.** Read together at least 20 minutes each day and let your child see you reading often—for enjoyment, to learn and to find information.
- **Talk with your child** about preschool. Ask your child to teach you newly-learned skills, and display your preschooler's schoolwork with pride.
- **Be a learning partner.** You and the teacher are on the same team with the same goal—your child's success in school. Tell your child that you and the teacher are working together to do what's best for your preschooler.



Call attention to the sounds of letters

Hearing the different sounds that make up words, and being able to put them together to form new words, is a skill educators call *phonemic awareness*. And when children can connect those sounds to written letters, they are taking an early step toward reading. To help your child develop these skills:

- **Practice separating words** into distinct sound chunks (*mmm-aaa-ttt*).
- **Teach your child** the sounds some letters make. For example, point to the written letter S, and say "This is the letter S. The word *sky* and the word *silly* start with S. It sounds like *sssss*."
- **Read tongue twisters** aloud together. It's OK if your child can't say them independently. Ask your preschooler to listen for the repeated sounds at the beginning of words. Point to the text and explain that the words that start with the same sound also start with the same letter.
- **Read nursery rhymes** and other rhyming books. Show that words that sound similar, like *cat* and *mat*, end with the same letters.

Add math in everyday ways

By incorporating number talk and math activities into family life, you can help your preschooler build a foundation in this core subject. Here are a few easy ways:

- **Talk about numbers.** Say, "We need *three* apples," not "some apples." Then, count them, "One, two, three."
- **Use the calendar.** Every day, show your child the date. Then, count the remaining days to a day your child is looking forward to.
- **Classify laundry.** Ask your child to sort clean clothes by category or owner.



Try a teacher tip at home

Is your child still doing something you've said many times not to do? The behavior may be so tempting your preschooler forgets your warnings. Teachers help students make better choices by reminding them of appropriate behavior. If you see your child heading for the same trouble, offer a reminder before the misbehavior occurs. "Remember, we use our eyes to see the fish in the bowl, but not our hands to touch them."

Routines boost well-being

Regular routines at home give children a reassuring sense of security as they encounter lots of new things at school. Your child will benefit from routines for:

1. **Sleeping.** Set a bedtime that lets your child get 10-13 hours of sleep each day.
2. **Meals.** Sharing at least one meal each day as a family builds communication skills and connection.
3. **Playing together.** Your child learns by playing, and interacting with you enriches the fun.





How can I help my child adjust to preschool?

Q: My child was excited all summer about starting preschool this fall. The school year has just begun, and now my child is saying “I don’t want to go.” What could be going on, and what should I do?

A: Starting preschool is a big change for children, and it is common for their feelings about it to change, too. Many children need time to adjust to preschool, and with your help, your child’s reluctance will likely be temporary.

To help your preschooler take this change in stride:

- **Downplay its significance.** Making too big a deal of this milestone in your child’s life can backfire. Instead, talk about other places your child has made friends and had fun learning. Say that preschool is similar.
- **See if you can get your child** to tell you what it is about preschool that is worrying. You may be able to offer an explanation that will ease your child’s mind. Make it clear that asking the teacher for help is OK.
- **Stay calm and cheerful** at drop-off. Give your child a reassuring hug and say when you’ll return.
- **Share your concerns** with the teachers and ask for more advice if needed. Preschool teachers are experienced at helping kids adjust.



Are you making learning a part of life?

You are your preschooler’s most influential teacher, and the things you do to encourage learning can make a big difference. Are you providing your child with many opportunities to learn? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you talk** with your child about things you have learned and things that interest you?
2. **Do you involve** your child in a wide variety of active, screen-free activities, such as investigating and creating?
3. **Do you surround** your child with tools for learning, such as books, paper, crayons, blocks and puzzles?
4. **Do you build** on your child’s current interests as well as introducing new ideas and activities? Offer praise when your child tries something new.

5. **Do you read** with your child every day, and include reading elements in other activities?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are making your home a learning place. For each no, try that idea.

“It is not what is poured into a student but what is planted that counts.”

—E.P. Bertin

Social skills help in school

Getting along with teachers and classmates makes school days more pleasant—and learning easier for everyone. To foster school success social skills, help your preschooler:

- **Use names.** Role-play what to say in social situations, like meeting someone new. “Hi, I’m Anna. What’s your name?”
- **Express strong feelings** with words, rather than actions.
- **Understand why rules** must be followed. Talk about the reasons for rules at home and at school.
- **Communicate ideas.** Have lots of back-and-forth conversations together.

Instill a sense of resilience

When children are learning new things, they don’t always succeed on the first try. But if they can recover and keep trying, they hold the key to ultimate success.

When your child is frustrated by falling short, acknowledge the feeling.

Then, be encouraging. “Many things take time and effort to learn. You can practice and try again. I bet you’ll get the hang of it soon!”



Make wise screen choices

Screens are everywhere. But the types of digital media preschoolers use—and how—matters. Pediatricians recommend that you:

- **Use ad-free, educational media** with your child and talk about it together.
- **Avoid allowing solo**, non-educational screen use. It is linked to delays in language, motor and thinking development.
- **Avoid using screens** to calm your child. This leads to poor digital habits.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, “Digital Ecosystems, Children, and Adolescents: Policy Statement.”

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