



## How to Help Your Child Be Ready for Kindergarten

What does "ready for school" mean? Think about all the things required for your child to be successful in kindergarten starting on day one and by the end of the first week. He or she has to be able to:

- successfully separate from you for a long period of time;
- put on/take off sweater, coat, jacket, hat, boots, gloves including zipping;
- participate in a group environment including waiting for a turn, sharing, and playing;
- focus on a new, unfamiliar adult and follow her directions;
- follow a structured routine and simple rules;
- figure out how to get around in the classroom and school;
- calm him/herself down if upset;
- wait to play at recess;
- do things s/he doesn't want to do;
- unpack and pack up her backpack, lunch, belongings, etc.;
- use the bathroom independently;
- clean up without being told;

and many other skills that require confidence and social competence. You'll notice that this list doesn't include any pre-academic or school-type skills. The academic skills expected for school readiness include being able to write his/her own name; use scissors, and writing tools; count to 20; sing or recite the alphabet; point to or name basic shapes and colors; know simple rhymes; and identify some letters in words. The suggestions in the previous pop-up pages will enhance your child's pre-academic readiness for school and contribute to his or her success. As you've read, getting ready for school starts in infancy, so continue doing all those things we've described and more.

In addition to the things already suggested (singing, talking, sharing books, playing), here are some important suggestions to consider.

**Give your child many new experiences** and expose them to new people, places, ideas, and things.

**Consider enrolling your child in a preschool or group program a few days a week** to help him/her begin to practice many of the tasks above. Do your research as suggested in previous sections and make sure it is high quality and has a good curriculum. This not only helps your child, it helps you by giving you the chance to ask a child development professional about getting your child ready for school.

**Practice separation.** If you can't or choose not to enroll your child in preschool be sure and give him/her many chances to practice separating from you. This has to be done in the right way and at the right times in development, so ask your health care provider or other trusted professional for ideas.

**Follow a consistent routine every day,** beginning as soon as this fits your child's personality and temperament. If you haven't started by the time your child is four, start then. Stick to a strict, early bedtime to make sure your child gets enough sleep. 10 hours is good for most young kids.

**Help your child learn self-care skills** like dressing and undressing, washing hands, toileting, and caring for personal items. Give your child practice packing and unpacking his/her backpack.

**Help your child learn responsibility by doing simple chores without reminding,** like cleaning up his/her things; setting the table; helping around the house; etc.

**Teach your child to be respectful and use manners:** saying please, thank you, and you're welcome; waiting until another person is done talking before speaking (not interrupting); speaking kindly and courteously to others; asking permission before doing something; etc.

**Help your child learn social-emotional skills** like self-calming; using words to express feelings; showing caring for others; etc.

Be sure and look for MECC's Family Night about school readiness and kindergarten transition. We held our first one this Fall for families with children who are four and will be going to kindergarten in a year.

Let us know what works for you, and ask if you need advice.