

# Enrolling in Public Kindergarten

Enrolling your child in kindergarten is an exciting and important decision. This resource provides answers to common questions about enrolling in public kindergarten.

## 1. Why should my child go to kindergarten?

Young children experience rapid changes in their growth and brain development. Kindergarten provides a free, high-quality learning opportunity during this critical time. In a kindergarten classroom, your child will be guided by caring, qualified teachers and benefit from learning and playing with other children. Your school will provide a community that recognizes each child's unique needs and fosters their love of learning. You and your child may be eligible for other resources like meals and transportation.



Children begin kindergarten with a range of abilities and develop at different rates in different ways.

## 2. When can I enroll my child in kindergarten in Minnesota?

You can enroll your child in kindergarten when they are 5 years old on or before September 1 of the calendar year. There are options for confirming your child's age. Check with your local district or charter school to choose the one that works for your family.

You may be asked to submit evidence of early childhood screening and immunizations (see Questions 5, 6 and 9 for more information). Your school will support you in completing any necessary steps.

## 3. Where can I send my child to public school?

All families can enroll a child in the district where they live. Use Minnesota School District Finder (<https://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/schooldistricts/>) to find your district. In Minnesota, families can choose to enroll in a different district. This is called open enrollment (<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/open/>). Families may also enroll their child in a charter school. Charter schools are free public schools that are not connected to a district.

## 4. What papers or forms do I need to submit to enroll?

Check with your local district or charter school to learn about enrollment forms. Families are not required to submit proof of citizenship or immigration status to enroll. Your district will work with you to submit the required information.

## 5. What is early childhood screening?

Screening is a free and simple check to see how your child is growing and may lead to other free resources. Screening at 3 years of age is preferred, but a child may be screened between the ages of 3 and within 30 days of starting kindergarten. Information about screening in your area can be found on Help Me Connect ([HelpMeConnectMN.org](https://www.helpmeconnectmn.org)) or your local district. Families may submit a copy of a screening from Head Start, Child and Teen Checkups or share a written statement that they decline the screening. Talk to your school about completing an early childhood screening if you have not already done so.

## 6. What are immunization requirements?

Schools require your child's health record that shows medical history and vaccines. Your doctor or clinic can provide you an immunization record. Minnesota law requires children enrolled in school to be im-

Call your local school district or charter school if you have questions about kindergarten.



munized against certain diseases unless the child is exempt. See the Minnesota Department of Health website (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/basics/kids.html>) for more information.

### **7. Does my child have to go to Kindergarten?**

Kindergarten is not required in Minnesota. However, you are strongly encouraged to enroll your child in kindergarten when they are age-eligible.

### **8. How do I know if my child is “ready” for kindergarten?**

In Minnesota, when to start kindergarten is based on age and not what your child is able to do. Children arrive in classrooms with a range of skills. Schools are required to support and educate all children.

It’s important for adults to work together as a child starts kindergarten. Families are a child’s first and most important teacher. Your school will partner with you to support this big step.

### **9. Does my child have to be tested before starting kindergarten?**

While screening (<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/elsprog/screen/index.htm>) may be required for kindergarten, it is not a test and your child doesn’t need a certain score. Your school may conduct a range of activities to get to know your child before the first day of school. However, this information cannot be used to tell your family that your child is not ready for kindergarten.



### **10. My child has a delay or disability, should I wait a year?**

All children, including those with identified delays or disabilities, can start kindergarten when they are 5 years old (see Question 2). Kindergarten typically provides access to a free full-day, full week program which may not be part of your child’s early childhood special education program. Children with disabilities receive necessary services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Start Early. Talk with your school so they can get to know your child and welcome you to the community.

### **11. Is my child required to speak and/or understand English?**

No. Children begin kindergarten with a range of skills that includes speaking and understanding English. There are many benefits to knowing multiple languages. Schools teach English learners in a way that supports their family’s home language and culture. A kindergarten classroom is designed to support your child’s English language development. Children who speak other languages may also be eligible for additional language services.



### **12. My child has a summer birthday. Is it better to wait a year?**

Research shows that delaying kindergarten provides no long-term benefits. Families are encouraged to enroll their child in kindergarten when they are 5 years old on or before September 1 of the calendar year, even if they have a summer birthday.

### **13. My child didn’t attend preschool or child care, should I wait a year?**

Children have different experiences before kindergarten, including at home with their families or other caregivers. Kindergarten classrooms are prepared to support all children and provide a positive introduction to school. You are strongly encouraged to enroll your child in kindergarten when they are age-eligible.

### **14. Should my child’s caregiver, preschool teacher, or healthcare provider tell me when my child should start kindergarten?**

Caregivers, preschool teachers, and healthcare providers help support your child’s development, but in the end the decision to start kindergarten is a family’s choice.

### **15. Can my child start kindergarten if they are 4 years old by September 1?**

Families with children younger than 5 on or before September 1 may consider early entrance to kindergarten. Check with your district or charter school to learn about their early entrance policy.

### **16. Is public school kindergarten free?**

Yes, it is free. Your child has a right to free public kindergarten. No child can be excluded from school activities if the family cannot pay. Schools ask students to bring supplies such as pencils and notebooks. Let your child’s school know if you need help getting supplies.

*For more information on enrolling into kindergarten, visit Minnesota Department of Education’s kindergarten webpage (<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/k/>).*