

GETTING YOUR CHILD READY for Kindergarten



Connecticut State Department of Education

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Families are their children's first teachers. Parents can help their children enter kindergarten feeling happy, confident and safe. Share what you see and ask your child questions. Note what your child finds interesting and then join him or her in these interests. Children love to explore new places, ideas and things. Spending time with your child is more valuable than any toy. Enjoy this time with your child; it passes by quickly. The suggestions in this booklet can help your child develop key thinking and learning skills for kindergarten.

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GETTING READY

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SPEAK AND LISTEN

Before your child enters school, he or she should be able to:

Use and understand many words.

Use language to communicate.

Speak in complete sentences.

Ask questions.

Make simple rhymes.

Make up and share personal stories about his or her interests.

To help your child be ready for kindergarten, you can:

Use new words daily as you play and talk together in everyday activities. For example: "I'm waiting for the mechanic to fix my car because it is not working."

Help your child to use language to express his or her ideas, needs and feelings. For example: "Why do you think the girl in the book is laughing and clapping her hands?"

Model for your child by speaking in complete sentences with five or more words per sentence. Help your child to expand his or her sentences. For example: "Tell me what happened next."

Encourage your child to ask questions. Listen carefully to your child's questions and respond to them. Use "what, when, where, why and how" questions.

Say and sing nursery rhymes, rap and poetry, and play rhyme games. Help him or her to repeat the words that rhyme. Help your child to make up his or her own funny rhyming words.

Listen with interest to your child's stories, make comments and ask questions. Share your own stories. Show your own childhood photographs and tell stories about them.



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READ AND WRITE

Before your child enters school, he or she should be able to:

Show an interest in reading activities.

Select familiar books and tell why he or she likes them. Retell favorite stories from books.

Handle a book appropriately.

Recognize some letters.

Recognize and print his or her first name.

Use pencils, markers and crayons to draw and write.

To help your child be ready for kindergarten, you can:

Point out and name familiar signs or labels in the store.

Read books several times and ask questions about the stories. Act out the stories with your child using dolls, stuffed animals or puppets.

Read books often with your child so he or she learns how to hold and use a book. Allow your child to pretend to “read” to you favorite stories from books.

Point out letters that are in your child’s name or on familiar signs. Ask the child if he or she recognizes a familiar letter in a word. Put magnetic letters on the refrigerator for your child to use.

Talk to your child about his or her name and the letters in it. Print your child’s name whenever possible, such as on drawings or below his or her photograph. Encourage your child’s attempts to “write” his or her name with letter-like shapes.

Provide your child with pencils, markers and crayons and allow him or her to scribble or draw. Provide opportunities for your child to see you write, such as writing a shopping list or a letter.

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USE MATHEMATICS

Before your child enters school, he or she should be able to:

Be curious about and interested in number-related activities.

Describe and talk about objects that have different sizes, colors, shapes and patterns.

Sort items by “same” and “different.”

Sort familiar objects from smallest to largest, shortest to tallest and lightest to heaviest.

To help your child be ready for kindergarten, you can:

Guess the number of cookies on a plate. Repeat counting rhymes and play singing games with numbers.

Talk about the big and small balls, the red and yellow blocks, and the round cookie or square plate.

Play games where your child has to find the matching sock, shoe and mitten. Set the table by matching every plate with a napkin, cup and fork. Look for picture games, playing cards and dominoes for finding matches.

Gather a variety of objects from your child’s toy box and line them up from largest to smallest. Organize boxes of cereal, rice and pasta from tallest to shortest. Put a variety of objects in a bag and sort them from heaviest to lightest.



USE MATHEMATICS

Before your child enters school, he or she should be able to:

Use words like “near,” “far,” “top,” “bottom,” “under,” “first,” “second” and “last” to describe the position of objects.

Count and match the number to an object.

Recognize some numbers.

To help your child be ready for kindergarten, you can:

Use your morning routine to practice “First we get up, second we wash our face.” Use the tune of a familiar song to create a movement song: “Put your hands on top of your head; stand on top of the box; crawl under the table.” Use these words in directions: “Put your sneakers under the bed; put the teddy bear on top of the pillow.”

Turn mealtime into counting fun by having your child count objects as he or she helps to set the table. Count objects whenever you are driving or walking to school or on errands. Check out the local library for counting books. Children love to read and re-read these books.

Play “I Spy” with numbers as you travel; find numbers in books; count, measure and estimate while making dinner. Look for number symbols in magazines, cut out and glue on paper all the 2s, 3s, etc. Put magnetic numbers on the refrigerator for your child to use.



BUILD PHYSICAL ABILITY

Before your child enters school, he or she should be able to:

Choose activities that use his or her body.

Dress himself or herself independently.

Use his or her body for creative expression.

To help your child be ready for kindergarten, you can:

Encourage him or her to climb up the slide, use a swing, run outdoors, jump with you or go for a walk.

Work with him or her to practice putting on clothes and using buttons, zippers and snaps.

Teach him or her to dance to music, pretend play and explore using a variety of materials, such as paints and crayons, to express his or her thoughts.



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PARTICIPATE AND COOPERATE

Before your child enters school, he or she should be able to:

Work and play together with other children.

Stay involved in an activity to its completion.

Follow routines and directions.

Work out problems with others.

Understand other people's feelings.

To help your child be ready for kindergarten, you can:

Provide lots of opportunities for your child to play and participate in groups, such as library story hours, church groups and visits with other children.

Encourage your child to choose his or her own experiences and/or materials. Help your child learn to stay with an activity to its completion by sharing and working on the activity with him or her. Use positive words of encouragement such as, "You are doing a good job picking up your blocks."

Play games with him or her such as, "First find the red truck and then the yellow block. Put the truck and the block under the blue box." Be clear when giving directions. "Please hold my hand as we cross the street." Have your child repeat the directions so you know he or she understands.

Help him or her in solving problems by offering alternative ways to do something, or by suggesting some words to use to resolve a conflict. Encourage your child to ask an adult for help when he or she is unable to resolve a problem.

Recognize your child's feelings and help him or her to recognize the feelings of others. Give your child suggestions on how to help others in need. Read stories that describe feelings in others, and talk about events related to characters' feelings.



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INVESTIGATE, EXPERIMENT, DISCOVER

Before your child enters school, he or she should be able to:

Show curiosity, ask questions and explain why things happen.

Use words that describe changes, motion, position, order and attribute.

Use the senses to observe, describe and predict the environment.

To help your child be ready for kindergarten, you can:

Let him or her explore, ask questions, build, take apart objects and try things out. Take “discovery walks.” Answer questions such as, “What do worms eat?” and “Where is the wind?” Play “hide and seek” and “I find” games.

Use words such as day/night, big/little, fast/slow, sunny/cloudy, ice/water and soft/hard. Sing songs. Make a “wish list.” Play “What happens when you drop an egg; ice melts?”

Provide objects to feel, touch, hear, smell, taste and weigh. Play “I see ...” games; listen to music; taste new foods and touch textures, e.g., wool, leather. Observe plants growing and flowers opening up. Express feelings and scribble experiences and predictions. Watch and draw weather conditions.

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INVESTIGATE, EXPERIMENT, DISCOVER

Before your child enters school, he or she should be able to:

Compare and group objects according to shapes, sizes, living/nonliving and others.

Show interest in simple and safe experiments.

To help your child be ready for kindergarten, you can:

Collect objects such as marbles or shells. Play “Can you show me something round, pointed, etc.” or “Can you find a living thing that has four legs?” Describe objects with different shapes. Group household objects in the kitchen or closet. Use words such as cold/hot or smooth/rough.

Let him or her find out what floats, what melts, what turns sour; or what happens when salt or sugar is added to water. Talk with your child about what happens. Show how cooking changes food, e.g., raw egg, boiled egg, omelet. Mix different paints and see color changes. Discuss cause and effect experiences, e.g., light a candle. What happens when it is covered up? Discuss safety.

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For more information, contact the Bureau of
Early Childhood Education at 860-713-6571



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