

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Prince Edward County Elementary School

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Set your child on the path to a positive preschool year

Your child is starting preschool, and you are probably excited and proud. That's great! You and your child may both be nervous, too. The first days of preschool can be scary for children. They are entering a new world filled with unfamiliar adults, kids, rules and surroundings. Even kids who have already completed a year or two of preschool may have a few jitters when they return.



To smooth the way for your child:

- **Visit the school** before the school year starts, if possible. Take a tour together. See if you can arrange to meet his teacher.
- **Read books with your child** about starting school. *Chu's First Day of School* by Neil Gaiman and *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn are two popular books. Ask your local librarian for other recommendations.
- **Talk about all the fun things** your child will do at preschool, such as listening to stories and playing games.
- **Be cheerful.** Avoid saying things like, "I'm so sad. I wish you were staying home!"
- **Talk to other parents.** Consider inviting a classmate to play with your child at your home or a nearby park.
- **Do something special** with your child after the first week of preschool. Celebrate with a trip to the playground or another treat.

Source: D. Tunis and others, "13 Tips for Starting Preschool," National Association for the Education of Young Children, nise.com/startingup.



Prepare for success with teacher tips

What are the secrets to making sure your child has a successful year in preschool? Try this advice from seasoned teachers:

- **Follow routines.** Children thrive when they have regular times to eat, sleep, read, etc. Ask about preschool every day. End the day with a bedtime story.
- **Encourage your child** to play by the rules. Know and talk about classroom rules. Never tell your child you think a rule is silly.
- **Tell the teacher** about any changes at home, such as a new living arrangement or new baby.
- **Stay up-to-date** on preschool news. Read the information that comes home from your child's teacher.
- **Say positive things** about preschool and the teacher in front of your child. Let her know that you and the teacher are on the same team to help her succeed.
- **Don't overschedule** your child. Activities are great, but kids need some downtime, too.

Words, words, everywhere!

Your preschooler may not be reading yet, but you can feed his desire to read by having fun with the words around him.

When you go out with your child, point out words and letters everywhere you go, on signs, menus, even license plates. See if he can find the letters of his name.

Serve up learning every day at family meals

Experts say that eating meals as a family increases children's health and resilience, and builds their vocabularies. To make the most of mealtime:

- **Plan together.** Ask your child to help you make menus and grocery lists.
- **Involve your child** in preparing meals. She can rinse vegetables and measure ingredients. Show her how to set the table.
- **Have each family member** relate one good thing about his or her day.
- **Start traditions,** like "Learn a new word Wednesday."



Source: A. Fishel, Ph.D., "FAQ," The Family Dinner Project, nise.com/eat.

Foster creative expression

Your preschooler is at an ideal age to develop his creativity. To show him that creativity is something you value:



- **Allow artistic freedom.** Avoid offering assistance your child may not need.
- **Be encouraging.** Praise his effort and creativity, rather than the actual product. Say, "This is interesting. Tell me about it," instead of "This is a beautiful drawing."
- **Expect a mess.** Choose washable art supplies. Protect clothing and household items during messy activities.



How can I make drop-off time easier on my child?

Q: My daughter bursts into tears when I drop her off at preschool. It's been a week, and things haven't gotten better. What can I do to make the separation less stressful for both of us?

A: It's difficult for parents to watch their children fall apart when it's time to say goodbye. But what's going on is normal for kids at this age. Your child is still very reliant on you and being apart makes her feel unsure.



Work with the teacher to assure your child that she'll be safe and cared for at preschool and that you will always come back for her. Here's how:

- **Show your child you trust her teacher.** Tell her, "If you need help, I want you to ask Mrs. Jones. She will take wonderful care of you."
- **Reassure her about your return.** Draw a clock that shows the time you'll come. Say, "When the clock on the wall looks like this, I'll be here."
- **Follow a short goodbye routine.** Perhaps you can walk your child to her cubby and watch her store her things. Then give her a hug and kiss, tell her you'll see her soon, and go. Tears may still fall for the first few weeks, but eventually the routine will be comforting to your child.
- **Ask the teacher** how your child does after you leave. Find out about the activities your child seems to like best at school. Then be sure to talk with your daughter about them at home.

Parent Quiz

Are you raising a respectful child?

Preschoolers are learning that showing respect for teachers and classmates is a key part of making the classroom a happy place to learn. Are you teaching your preschooler to respect others? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Do you model** respectful behavior? This includes showing respect for your child.
- ___ **2. Do you teach** polite language, such as *please*, *thank you* and *may I*?
- ___ **3. Do you encourage** your child to apologize for his mistakes?
- ___ **4. Do you teach** your child to accept people's differences?
- ___ **5. Do you give** specific praise when your child shows polite behavior? "Thank you for knocking before coming in."

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are teaching your child the basics of respectful behavior. For each no, try that idea.

"It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength."
—Maya Angelou

Set limits with love

Children who have been taught discipline in a loving manner at home generally do better in school than those who haven't. Here are some simple methods to try:

- **Enforce a few reasonable rules.** Consistency makes it easier for young children to cooperate.
- **State things positively.** Whenever possible, tell your child what *to do* rather than what *not to do*.
- **Focus on success.** Compliment your child's efforts. "You put your art supplies away. You are taking good care of your things!"

Source: N. Paulu, *Helping Your Child Get Ready for School*, U.S. Department of Education, niswc.com/getready.

Sleep builds brainpower

Did you know that getting 11 to 13 hours of sleep each night is not only healthy for your child, it helps him be more alert, pay closer attention and remember what he learns?

Help your child get this needed sleep by setting a sleep schedule. Stick to the same bedtime and wake time each day. Try to keep it on the weekends, too.

Source: J.A. Mindell and J.A. Owens, *A Clinical Guide to Pediatric Sleep: Diagnosis and Management of Sleep Problems*, Wolters Kluwer, 2015.

Learning is an adventure!

Every time your child sees or does something that's new to her, it's an adventure. This fall, plan a few adventures to help your child learn about:



- **Jobs people do.** When you run errands, talk with your child about the work the people you meet do.
- **Animals.** Take a trip with your child to a local farm, petting zoo or pet store.
- **Other cultures.** Try foods from other nations. Read books about those cultures.

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