

INSIGHTS FOR PARENTS

IS YOUR CHILD READY FOR KINDERGARTEN?

Your child is five—going on 50—and you're getting ready to register him or her for kindergarten. Is he or she ready? Some children mature more quickly than others. Entering children in school at the right time in their development increases the likelihood of their succeeding in studies and enjoying school.

Children who are ready for kindergarten:

- Enjoy getting along with others and are able to take turns and cooperate in a group. Children ready for kindergarten are also able to enjoy unstructured play with other children and understand and observe property rights of others.
- Are comfortable being away from parents or child care providers for short periods.
- Are able to stay in an activity for 15 to 20 minutes and sit still for brief periods of time.
- Are able to express themselves clearly when speaking; ask questions to get information; know their full name, address, and telephone number; tell about their experiences; and discuss stories told or TV programs viewed.
- Can follow a short sequence of simple directions and cope with minor disappointments.
- Are able to use the toilet without assistance from others, put on their coats without help, feed themselves using a fork and spoon, hop on one foot two or more times in a row, catch a large bouncing ball, and run and stop on a signal.
- Put toys away when asked
- Can identify some colors, familiar objects at home, and sounds in their own environment, such as a dog barking or horn honking.
- Can draw simple figures and copy a circle and square. A child ready for kindergarten also understands simple ideas, such as big and small, up and down, above and below, and some number concepts, such as one hat and two crayons.

If your child exhibits most of these characteristics, he or she is probably ready for school. If he or she does not exhibit most of these characteristics, the principal of the school your child will attend can help you determine the best time for your child to start school and offer suggestions to help your child prepare for and do well in school.

(more)

Easing the transition

There are many things you can do to ease your child's transition to kindergarten. Here are just a few things to try:

- If possible, take your child to the school grounds during the summer months. Let him or her explore the grounds and play on the playground equipment. If possible, go inside the buildings and let him or her explore. Being familiar with how to get to school and its layout will make your child more confident in his or her new surroundings.
- If your child is not familiar with libraries, take him or her to the public library to read, explore, and discuss why libraries are important. Tell your child he or she will be able to go to the school's library frequently while in school.
- Try to expose your child to a variety of situations and contacts with other children so he or she gets used to being around children of varying ages.
- Make sure your child understands that he or she will have plenty of time to play at school, both in the classroom and outside. Letting your child know school will not be all work and no play will make him or her less anxious.
- If possible, do some "dry run" school evenings and mornings during the summer. Prepare your child's backpack and ~~school lunch~~ and actually get up in the morning and go to school. It may be good practice for mom and dad, too!
- Practice the pledge of allegiance and talk about why he or she will be reciting it every morning at school.
- Be sure your child is comfortable going to the bathroom alone and stress that it's okay to ask the teacher for permission to be excused.
- Stress that school is a safe environment and that teachers and staff are there to help your child learn and have positive experiences.
- Acknowledge that he or she may be scared, anxious, and stressed the first few days and discuss why those feelings are present in most people who are exposed to new situations.

Insights for Parents is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education.