



School Ready?

Starting school is an exciting time. It can be a daunting time, too. But with a little preparation and encouragement, most children will settle in easily, ready to learn and discover. You are your child's greatest teacher and role model. The most valuable things you can do for your child at the moment are to HAVE FUN and PLAY with them. Playful interactions through the days and weeks ahead will help to prepare your child mentally, physically and emotionally for life in a busy classroom.

School readiness can mean different things to different people. The aim of this guide is to provide an understanding of how you can help you child to be ready for school. I have spoken to teachers and educators that have a great deal of experience in helping children to cope with times of transition and have put together their top tips.

Independence

Your child will really benefit from being as independent as possible when they start school. Of course teaching staff will always be on hand to help, but children feel a real sense of achievement when they can accomplish things for themselves!

How You Can Help

- Support children's growing independence as they do things for themselves, such as pulling up their pants after toileting, putting on their own coat and zipping it up independently, putting on their own shoes.
- Help children who are struggling with self-care by leaving a last small step for them to complete e.g. pulling up their trousers from below the waist, zipping up their coat once the zip is secured.
- If your child will be having hot dinners, practice using a knife and fork. If they are taking packed lunch, practice opening the packets and containers of food they will be taking. Maybe they could use their new lunchbox and water bottle when you go for a picnic in the park?
- Get your child into the habit of hanging their coat up, putting their toys away, clearing the table to prepare them for doing these things at school. Why not turn it into a game? Many schools use a piece of music to indicate tidy up time and motivate children to help. Try this at home and ask which song your child would like "Mission Impossible" is a popular one!

Social Skills

Having already spent time in a preschool setting, your child is probably already well on the way to having the social skills they need to succeed at school.

How You Can Help

- Give them time to chat about the things they know or like and why. They will like to share their ideas and know that others are interested in what they have to say.
- Show, share and talk about your feelings. For example, let your child know when you are happy or upset. Give labels to the emotions and talk about how you know how someone is feeling.
- Don't always let them be first or the winner so they can understand that this is OK and can learn to manage their feelings of disappointment.
- Provide activities that involve turn taking and sharing e.g. board games.
- Choose books that help children explore their ideas about friends and friendship and to talk about their feelings.

Teach them some useful phrases such as "Can I join in?" or "Do you want to share?"

School Readiness

If a child can hold a pencil,
write their own name,
count to 100,
recognise all the colours & shapes.
But doesn't know how to make friends.
Manage their emotions
and conflict resolution.
To be independent
& have self help skills.
None of the other stuff matters.

The Curiosity Approach



Have you heard of the 'flip trick' for putting a coat on? Put your child's open coat, upside down in front of them (with the hood nearest their body). They can then put their hands in the armholes and flip the coat over their head!

Or, try the 'Superhero trick'. Get them to pop the hood on their head and reach behind to push their arms into the sleeves.

Also help your child to know which shoe goes on which foot by drawing half a picture (like a smiley face) into the left shoe and the other half of the picture into the right shoe- when the shoes are placed correctly the picture will look complete!



It is important to remember one child may have only just turned four whilst their class mate is about to turn five, there is a wide gap in their abilities in that fact alone. Supporting children in their work toward responsible self-care and self-regulation is the best that can be done, the rest will come in time.

Communication & Language

Good communication is essential for learning. As well as being the foundation for reading and writing, it's also vital for children's social and emotional development. Most early years teachers agree that, for a child starting school, being able to talk about what they think and explain how they feel are more important than any academic skills.

How You Can Help

- Research tells us that reading to your child is the most important way you can support your child's early learning. So make time for bedtime stories.
- Read stories children know, pausing at intervals to encourage them to "read" the next word. Can they recognise certain letters or words? Ask them questions about the pictures; what do you think is happening? What do you think might happen next?
- Collecting objects found on walks in the park or at the beach, help introduce new types of vocabulary.
- Play 'I spy' by describing the item, for example, 'I see something that is tall, it's made of metal, it has a bulb at the top' and then talk about the sound it starts with.
- At the end of the day, encourage your child to talk about what they've done and perhaps recount it: "first, next, then, after that, finally".
- If your child's favourite word is "why", turn it back at them with: "well, why do you think?"

Your child may be starting school with identified communication difficulties, or you may have concerns that have not yet been addressed (due to COVID-19). ICAN provide an online "Progress Checker" tool which allows parents to see how your child is getting on with their speech, language and communication development. It should give you an idea of how your child is developing and whether you need some support or advice to help you and them. <https://ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/progress-checker-home/>

The MORE that you
READ, the **MORE** things
you will **KNOW**.
The MORE that you
Learn, the **MORE** places
you'll **GO**.

Dr. Seuss



Listening & Attention

Listening is one of the basic building blocks of language and communication. Up to 80% of learning in the early years is verbal.

It's worth pausing for a moment to consider what we mean when we ask children to listen. We are really saying: can you hear my voice; can you listen to the words I'm saying; can you look at me or the object; can you filter out background noise of other people talking or environmental sounds; can you clearly see the visual stimuli; can you break down my sentences and understand their meaning; and can you sustain all of these at the same time for a reasonable length of time?

How You Can Help

- By consistently reading to your child every day, your child will learn to concentrate and sit still for longer periods of time. If children are struggling to listen to a story, pause, ask questions or ask them to find objects in a picture.
- Use audio resources as part of your children's regular activities. Audio stories, songs, and listening games such as environmental sounds will all help your children to develop listening skills.
- Plan regular listening activities into your week. Simple ideas such as Stop/Go games, Musical Statues, Simon Says can all be easily played.
- Be a good role-model. As adults, we need to be good listeners ourselves. When talking to children, get down to their level, make eye contact and show interest in what they are saying.
- Create quiet spaces or dens for children to spend quiet time.
- Your environment can contribute to distractions: turn off the TV.

It's natural to feel nervous about your child starting school, but remember that your child can easily pick up on your emotions.

Actively Learn

Children learn through sensory experiences and through being active learners. Sensory experiences come through feeling, smelling, hearing, looking at and listening to, objects. The active learning experience comes through the choices we give children in what they do. No one else can have experiences for the child; children must do this for themselves.

How You Can Help

- Talk to your child about new things when they notice them, like what a spider's web is for, items floating or sinking in the bath, how some items are heavier than others.
- Help your child to learn from making mistakes by keep trying, not giving up, and trying a different way. This is all part of persevering and resilience, both important for life experiences.
- Help to develop your child's independence and a 'can do' attitude by giving them a few everyday responsibilities. Perhaps they could lay the table, feed a pet or empty the washing machine.
- Encourage them to talk to you about their paintings and drawings and tell you what their marks mean.
- Help them to count claps, jumps, stairs, cars or food on their plate. This will start to develop an understanding of numbers and quantities.
- Tapestry, Ganneys Meadow & the My Child Can Facebook pages have lots of home learning ideas to support your child's active learning.

Due to the current pandemic, your child probably won't have the opportunity to attend taster sessions before they start school in September. Ask the school if they will be putting any photos on their website showing how the classroom will be laid out or giving a virtual tour so you can talk about it with your child.

Finally, don't forget to fill in and return any transition pack or "All about me" forms that you may receive from your child's new school.