

Preparing Your Child for School

Achieving success in school is based on a partnership between the home environment and the school setting. The best learning opportunities for young children take place in the home setting. Children who come from a home environment where learning is encouraged and valued, generally perform better when screened and more readily adjust to the school setting. The following is a list of basic skills parents should introduce to their children prior to starting school:

Skill	Tips on teaching your child
1) Identification Data	Child should be able to state his/her full name – first, middle, and last. Child should know the difference between a nickname and his/her real name. When asked, child should be able to state his/her age in years. Teach your child where he/she lives. Focus on the name of the street and city. For safety reasons, child should also know his/her parents' names.
2) Colors	Child should be able to name basic colors of red, blue, yellow, green, orange, purple, pink, gray, brown, and black. Have the child practice naming the color of objects in his/her environment. Use colors to describe objects in conversation such as "You are putting on a red shirt or you are sitting in a blue chair".
3) Name common objects	Increase your child's vocabulary by working with him/her to name common objects in the environment or books. When reading to your child, take time to look at the pictures and name objects. When riding in the car, talk about objects you see.
4) Identify the use of objects	Child should be able to identify why we have certain objects, such as stoves are for cooking, cars are for driving, chairs are for sitting, and beds are for sleeping. Talk to your child about how we use objects as you follow your daily routine. For example, we take a bath in a bathtub and use soap, shampoo, and a washcloth to get ourselves clean. Second example, we eat food with a fork or spoon and we drink out of a cup.
5) Prepositions/ Connecting Words	Child should be able to describe the location of objects in relation to one another using terms such as in/out, up/down, over/under, etc. Play games that allow you to show relationships such as putting toys in a box, under a box, beside a box, and over a box, etc.
6) Different/Same	Child should have a basic understanding of objects that look alike and or different based on certain characteristics such as shape, size, and color.
7) Basic Handwriting	Child should have access to a pencil or crayons to practice basic writing skills as often as possible. Start with teaching the child to draw a straight line (vertical and horizontal) and then to draw a circle. Children need to learn basic writing strokes before they can write letters or numbers.
8) Fine Motor Skills	Children need to practice basic motor skills such as using a pencil/crayon, picking up small objects (example - putting coins in a piggy bank), and stacking small blocks.
9) Gross Motor Skills	Children need to practice skills such as standing on one foot, jumping, hopping, walking a straight line, catching a ball, and throwing a ball. Practice of skills is important to create a sense of balance. It is important to use balls of different sizes.
10) Identifying Body Parts	Child should be able to name body parts. Be sure to include less commonly discussed parts such as heels, ankles, elbows, neck, jaw, etc.
11) Counting	Child should practice counting to ten as a minimum.
12) Quantity/Size	Child should have an understanding of what quantity numbers represent. For example, practice having the child put a select number of objects in a cup or on the table. Then discuss what "3" looks like, what "5" looks like, etc. Also, the child should understand size variance such as big/little/small, short/tall/long, etc.
13) Alphabet	Child should begin to identify letters of the alphabet, starting with the upper case letters and then the lower case letters. A good place for parents to start is by introducing the letters in the child's name. For advanced learners, letter sounds can be introduced after recognition of the alphabet is accomplished.
14) Self-Help Skills	Child should be able to independently take care of personal needs such as dressing, brushing teeth, toileting, hand washing, eating with fork/spoon, and drinking from a cup,
15) Social- Emotional Skills	Child should be prepared to separate from parent/caregiver and engage in social activities with other children and adults. Prepare your child by providing opportunities to socialize outside of the home such as at restaurants, community activities, sporting events, etc.

All children have different learning styles. Some learn better by listening, some by seeing, and others by doing. The best approach with young children is to use a combination of all three styles and to repeatedly introduce new concepts in varying formats. Do not worry if your child has difficulty with a new task, the key to learning is repetition and consistency! The best way to teach your child is to talk and read to him/her. Children excel when they are in a language rich environment.