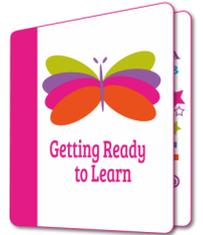


**“Getting ready
for school
begins at birth.”**

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL



Your child learns and develops mainly through play. It cannot be stressed enough how valuable play opportunities are for your child, allowing him/her to explore the world around them will make connections in their brain which leads to learning. All the positive experiences that babies and young children have received over the years contribute towards them being ‘ready for school’. Supporting your child to become independent, communicative, feeding and dressing themselves, and using the toilet is great preparation for this next stage in their development.

Starting school is a very exciting step in a child’s life yet may be stressful for some children and their parents. This leaflet aims to reassure and inform you of some simple and fun everyday activities to support your child so that they can start school healthy, happy, active, curious and sociable.

Tips To Try

- ⇒ Give your child lots of opportunities for unstructured play. Play gives your child the opportunity to explore the world, make connections in their thinking which leads to deeper learning.
- ⇒ Encourage your child to become independent—feeding (using a knife and fork and drinking from a cup), toileting , washing and drying their own hands, and dressing themselves, particularly putting on their coat.
- ⇒ Encourage your child to talk, ask questions and wait for the answers. Show interest in things that they are interested in
- ⇒ Give your child plenty of opportunities to be active every day—run, jump, dance, hop and skip. Explore the outdoors .
- ⇒ Encourage your child to love books, continue to read every night to your child. Join the library to get books to continue your Big Bedtime Read.
- ⇒ Help your child interact with others—give your child some words they can use to ask someone to play.
- ⇒ Play games together which practise turn taking or sharing.
- ⇒ Play ‘schools’ with your child.
- ⇒ Give them some words to ask for help from an adult, such as asking to go to the toilet.
- ⇒ Tell your child what you will be doing while they are at school—so that they don’t worry about you!

Help Your Child Become More Independent.

The most useful thing you can do to get your child ready for school is to make sure they are comfortable doing simple tasks by themselves.

- Help them with **everyday tasks** like managing to go to the toilet by themselves.
- Washing their hands by themselves. A good way of showing how germs can linger is to let your child cover their hands in paint (pretend germs!) and then try to wash it all off.
- Encourage them to **get dressed by** themselves. Avoid shoes and clothes with fiddly buckles and buttons. Draw a picture or cut a sticker into two halves and place inside each shoe and help them practice **putting on their shoes**.
- **Eating** - Children having school dinners need to be able to use a full-sized knife and fork and may have to carry a plate or tray. If your child is taking a lunchbox, make sure they can open it as well as any containers and packets inside. Practice using knives and forks at home and opening and closing their lunch-box.
- With Covid-19—Introduce your child to blowing their nose and the routine of 'catch it, bin it, kill it' – catching their sneeze or runny nose in a tissue, putting it in the bin straightaway, then washing hands to kill germs. Some children find nose-blowing difficult, so play games to practise nose control – blowing a feather into the air, for example.



Practice Their Social Skills

Children learn and develop by playing alongside their peers, and they will make better progress if they are happy mixing with other children. You can encourage their social skills by:-

- Role Play and play 'Schools' with your child. You could use dolls and soft toys to practise saying "hello" or role playing asking another child to play with them.
- Give your child time to talk – and also make time to listen – as this will help develop their speaking and listening skills. Take turns for everyone to talk about the best part of your day over the dinner table. Have a fun quiz—what do they remember?
- Simple sharing games such as 'Snakes and Ladders' allow children to practise social skills and turn-taking. Use the language of turn-taking, like 'Whose turn is it next?' and 'thank you for waiting'.
- If possible, arrange to meet up with children from your child's new class as knowing one or two children before school begins will make the transition less scary. (Adhere to PHA guidance in relation to social distancing and other COVID 19 measures in place).



Reading and Writing

Your child is not expected to be able to read or write at this age, however, there are some ways you can get your child ready for learning:

- **Help them recognise their name.** It is handy if your child can find their space in the cloakroom.
- **Reading to your child** will improve their vocabulary, listening skills, and their understanding. Be enthusiastic when reading to your child as this will help them enjoy the experience and become enthusiastic readers when they are older.
- **Develop their motor skills** - as this will help develop their hand strength and hand-eye co-ordination which are key to helping your children learn to write and draw. Give your child plenty of opportunities to develop their physical skills through outdoor play. Develop their fine motor skills through activities such as pegging clothes on the line; threading pasta onto string, using scissors. Put a length of dried spaghetti into a lump of play dough and get your child to thread cereal (cheerios) over the spaghetti. Drawing and colouring activities are good for introducing children to mark-making.
- **Introduce them to numbers.** Why not go on a number hunt around your local area and take pictures of any numbers you find? You could also sing counting rhymes together or count objects as you set the table for dinner. Can your child get five forks or three cups out? Can they share them between members of the family?

Getting Closer to the BIG DAY

Being active every day, run, dance, hop & jump

Help your child follow simple instructions by giving them instructions at home. Start with one and then move to 2 when they are ready.

Develop a love of books, stories and songs.

PRAISE AND ENCOURAGE your child.

Talking about the exciting things your child is going to do at school will support them with any anxieties they may have. You could:

- **Visit the school.** Usually schools organise induction visits for children to meet their new teacher and spend time in the classroom, instead you could regularly walk past the school with your child and talk about how exciting it will be as they will be able to make lots of new friends.
- **Talk about how fun school is!** Talk about the fun activities and toys that your child will get to play with, or the outdoor play equipment. Older siblings or friends could be asked to share all the things they enjoy about school. Giving your child time to talk also lets them raise any concerns or questions.
- **Practise the school routine.** It can be helpful to do a practice journey before the big day, looking for interesting things on the way.
- It might be a good idea to make sure your child has school-friendly bedtimes and getting-up times a few days in advance.

Make healthy nutritious food and drink choices, especially water.

Chat about their likes, dislikes, feelings and emotions—use pictures

Be creative—use junk art, paint, play dough, give your child lots of opportunities for messy play

Turn-taking, helping and sharing together at home.

Ask question, encourage talking and wait for the answers.

Show interest in their fascination and curiosity to learn—what interests them? Help them develop their interests further.