



## Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Entering kindergarten is a big change for you and your child. It is an exciting time, and it also might be a little scary for you both. You can help by preparing yourself and your child for this big step well ahead of time. Provide opportunities for your child to practice being away from you and being more independent with self-help skills such as eating and dressing. Visit the school and find out what to expect. These steps will increase your child's confidence and make both of you feel more prepared for this big change!

### In the Year Before Kindergarten

- Set up times for your child to play with other children—including future classmates, if possible. Knowing how to play and get along with peers is a big part of kindergarten. Having a friend in class will help your child feel more comfortable.
- Teach your child how to do things independently. This will help your child start to build autonomy—the ability to do things separately from you.
- Let your child dress without your help. Teach your child how to open food containers. Teach them all the steps of using the bathroom alone. Your child's self-confidence will grow as they learn how to do things independently. Be sure to praise your child's growing independence: "You dressed all by yourself this morning!"
- Encourage your child to practice writing their first name. Teach them their address and telephone number.
- Limit television and other screen time to 1 to 2 hours a day. Your child will need to be able to stay calm and focus on real-world activities or a teacher for periods of time.
- Encourage your child to stick with activities for longer periods of time. This helps your child build self-regulation skills—the ability to monitor and control their own behavior.
- Take your child with you out into the world—to the library, grocery store, and other places. This will help your child feel more secure exploring new places.
- Create bedtime and wake-up routines over the summer before kindergarten starts. Help your child prepare for the school schedule.
- Visit your local school and your child's classroom. Meet the teacher. Find the bathroom! This will help build your child's confidence.

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## Getting Ready for Kindergarten *(continued)*

### In the Weeks Before School Starts

- Encourage your child to share how they are feeling about starting kindergarten. Talk with them about any concerns or fears.
- Visit a library. Find books about starting kindergarten, and read and talk about them together.
- Let your child know it's okay to be nervous and excited all at the same time.
- Talk about things that made (or make) you nervous. Share with your child about how you take care of yourself when you are nervous.
- Talk positively about school and the fun activities and new friends your child will make.
- Teach your child how to ask for help from the teacher.
- Make a plan for the first day of school. Talk about what will happen.

### On the First Day

- Spend some time with your child at the school on the first day. Let your child know when you will leave and what time you will return. Your child trusts you to return and needs to be told when that will happen. Do not sneak away.
- When you see your child at the end of the day, give them a big hug and tell them you missed them. Talk to your child about their first day! Attend to your child without other distractions.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.