

# Getting Ready for Kindergarten

You have a very important role in your child's education. In fact, your child has been learning since birth and you've been teaching from the very start! Following are some suggestions for preparing your child for elementary school next fall:



- **Set aside a regular time to read with your child every day.** Studies show that regularly reading aloud helps improve comprehension and increases a child's vocabulary. He'll also learn that books are fun and will want to read himself. When reading (and re-reading) favorite books, ask your child to use the pictures to retell the story. Extend the story by asking "what would happen if..." Help your child get his own library card and check out books.
- **Use conversation to build your child's vocabulary.** Through everyday conversation, expose your child to new words and talk about what words mean. For an unfamiliar word, explain it in a child-friendly way. For a familiar word, introduce a less familiar word with the same meaning. Relating new words to your child's personal experience also supports vocabulary development.
- **Look for opportunities to teach your child numbers and letters.** Make a game of it together. For example, count the people or dogs you see during a walk. Ask your child to find numbers or letters in signs. Help your child learn the letters of the alphabet in order and out of sequence. Use magnet letters or letters on cards to spell her name and other familiar words. Practice copying and writing letters.
- **Help your child develop important observation and conversation skills.** During errands, talk about what you see and do at the post office, grocery store, or bank. Share family stories. Make the most of time on the road. Point out words and symbols on signs. Ask your child to find letters and numbers on billboards and license plates. Sing songs together. Keep favorite books in the car.
- **Play rhyming games, sing songs, share nursery rhymes, and enjoy rhyming and repeating books.** All of those help your child develop early literacy skills. Rhyming words help children recognize sounds and syllables, skills children need when they are learning to sound out new words.
- **Encourage your kindergartner's natural love for learning** with praise. Recognize her curiosity and hard work.
- **Prepare your child for a full-day learning experience** away from home, especially if your child has not been part of a formal Pre-K program. Summer is a good time to help your child get used to a more structured, school-like schedule and spending time with other caregivers.
- **Set expectations for appropriate school behavior.** Kindergartners love to move and enthusiastic learners like to share what they're learning. However, being in school also means learning when to move and when to share. Make sure your child understands the importance of following classroom rules, and knows that you expect good behavior throughout the school day.
- **Encourage activities that involve sharing,** turn-taking, listening, following directions, and taking part in conversations. Children playing and sharing with others builds important skills that will be used throughout the school day.
- **Use everyday activities to help your child develop fine motor skills.** Any time children use both hands to complete an activity, they are working on fine motor skills that will help them become proficient writers in school. Building with LEGOs, stringing cereal on a piece of yarn, playing with Play-Doh, and cutting with child-safe scissors all will help your child learn to write! Encourage your child to draw and write using pencils, crayons, markers, finger paint, sidewalk chalk, even in sand or flour.
- **Have your child help with chores,** such as matching socks, feeding pets, or setting the table. Your child can help with simple recipes in the kitchen or kid-friendly yard work.
- **Teach your child to handle personal needs,** such as going to the bathroom without help, washing his hands, blowing his nose, feeding himself, tying his shoes, and buttoning and zipping his clothes. Until your child has mastered tying shoelaces, consider athletic shoes that slip on or have other fasteners for school days.
- **Encourage healthy habits,** such as eating nutritious foods, getting ample rest, having a regular bedtime, waking up on time, and being physically active.
- **Monitor screen time** if your child watches TV or uses a computer or other digital device. Educational programs and computer games provide important learning opportunities. However, they are no substitute for "face time" with family members and caregivers. That said, knowing how to use a computer, mouse, and keyboard are important skills that you and your child can practice together. Help your child make good choices when selecting television programs. Limit the amount of TV he watches
- **Encourage your child to share her thoughts** and feelings about starting kindergarten.

# What to Expect When Your Child is a Kindergartner

Early childhood experts tell us that five-year-olds generally share some common characteristics and abilities. Of course, every child is different, so your new kindergartner may be demonstrating some traits and skills already or may have mastered some and not shown others. That's perfectly normal.

Kindergarten is a time for lots of learning and your child's teacher is here to help! You can help your child practice these important skills so he is well prepared for kindergarten.

## New kindergartners often...

- Are eager and curious learners.
- Are physically active and participate in both structured and unstructured play, alone and with other children.
- Are interested in stories, books, rhymes, pictures, games, and songs.
- Enjoy imaginative play but can distinguish between real life and make-believe.
- Learn by doing, observing, imitating, investigating, examining, and exploring.
- Respond to praise and consistent rules.
- Are becoming more independent and want to make their own choices.
- Have an increasing attention span but need to change activities frequently.
- Like to talk and may enjoy being the center of attention.
- Develop friendships with peers and demonstrate empathy and understanding by trying to comfort and help others.
- Try both familiar and new strategies to solve a problem.
- Ask questions and seek new information.
- Can manage feelings and handle social situations more independently.

## A child typically comes to school with these skills...

- Knows that the school day includes many activities, including listening time and work time.
- Demonstrates appropriate school behavior, including when to use an "inside voice", when to wait for a turn, and how to share with friends.
- Sits and actively listens for 10 minutes or more at a time.
- Identifies basic shapes (2D and 3D shapes).
- Knows many letters by sight, both uppercase and lowercase.
- Writes some letters, for instance those in her name, holding a pencil or crayon correctly.
- Recognizes some letter sounds.
- Understands that letters form words, words make sentences, and sentences are separated by spaces in print. Knows that printed words read left to right and top to bottom.
- Follows multi-step directions.
- Talks in complete sentences in an understandable voice.
- Sorts objects by attributes such as color, shape, and size.
- Uses senses to learn about the world around him.
- Recognizes numbers and counts up to 20 in order.
- Uses materials to create original artwork to express herself.
- Can sequence familiar stories or events.

## Your child's teacher welcomes you as an active partner in your child's education.

### Here are just a few ways to get involved:

- **Sign up for a Parent Portal account** for safe and secure online access to key information about your child's academic career, 24/7. Go to [www.gcpsk12.org](http://www.gcpsk12.org) and click on the Parents tab at the top. (Once you register your child for kindergarten online, your Parent Portal account is activated!)
- **Learn how you can help at home**, using resources posted to the district's Early Learning web page and on the district's Pinterest account.
- **Stay informed on school and class happenings.** Read newsletters and reports that come home. Look for regular communication from the teacher by email, on teacher course pages, or in your child's book bag. Check the school website and the district website for updates.
- **Attend parent-teacher conferences** to discuss your child's progress.
- **Know the adults who work with your child daily**, including teachers, principal, other administrators, office staff, counselor, clinic worker, cafeteria staff, bus driver, and others.

*Find more information and resources for preparing your child for kindergarten on the [GCPS website](http://www.gcpsk12.org).*

