



get ready for preschool!

HOW YOU CAN PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR THE FIRST STEP IN THEIR ACADEMIC CAREER

The time has come for your little one to start preschool! This marks a new chapter in your child's life and yours as well. A chapter certain to be filled with new adventures, friendships, increased independence and joy.

But despite all of this you may find yourself asking, "Is my child really ready for this...and am I?"

Whether you plan to send your child to preschool starting next week, next fall or next year, there are some strategies you can start applying now to help make this transition a positive and successful one for all.

PROCEED WITH CONFIDENCE.

Feeling comfortable and having trust in the preschool that you will be sending your child to is essential. Take the time you need to tour different centers, meet the teachers and directors, spend time in the class and speak with other parents to hear their experiences.

ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE.

Start to foster independence in everyday activities now like getting dressed, cleaning up and washing hands. You can even start to introduce daily chores around the house. The key to teaching these skills is

to keep it fun! Make up songs to go along with them or if you are not that creative, search YouTube for some ideas. These everyday routines are a big part of preschool and it will prove to be very beneficial to help your child get familiar with them now.

ESTABLISH ROUTINES.

Children learn best with set schedules and routines. It removes an element of unknown and helps children understand time and expectations. It is especially important to establish, and stick with, morning and bedtime routines when your child starts preschool. A morning routine will help ensure your child starts the day off in a positive and productive way versus rushed or panicked. Self-care skills also promote increased independence. A nighttime routine is important for ensuring your child gets a restful night's sleep so they have the energy and



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stamina needed to keep up in a busy class. It is never too early to start establishing these routines....so start tonight!

SHARING IS CARING. Sharing, whether it be toys or attention, is a common theme in preschool. Have your child practice sharing toys with you and friends whenever possible. It is also important to help your child learn to share attention. Practice this at home by having your child wait a moment before you attend to a request. Starting with small increments, slowly build up their tolerance for waiting for your attention or for an item. If this goes well, you can start to work on encouraging your child to say "excuse me" or raise their hand to get your attention if you are busy or are talking with someone else.

READ, READ, READ. Set aside time every day for story time. This will be a part of your child's day in preschool and a great way to teach new skills. Help your child develop a love for reading at a young age through keeping story time interesting and fun.

EDUCATE. Take time to explain to your child what preschool is all about. A great way to do this is through books or short video clips. Engage them with the pictures and encourage them to ask questions. Listen to their concerns. Some great books about starting preschool include, "Preschool Day Hooray!" by Linda Leopold Strauss and "Maisy Goes to Preschool" by Lucy Cousins. Share your favorite memories of preschool and whenever possible, have your child observe their new class prior to their first day.

THE GOODBYE. Alright Moms and Dads, this is the tough one! When the first day of preschool finally arrives, you must keep the goodbye short and sweet. Create a fun goodbye ritual, like a secret handshake, that is special to you and your child and practice it leading up to the big day. But once you say that goodbye, muster up a smile and leave, even if your child begins to cry. Trust in the teachers to handle it. Chances are, by the time you step foot out the door, the only one crying is you!

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The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends having at least one caregiver for every four to nine children ages 2 to 3, and 1:8 to 1:10 for 4- and 5-year-olds.

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