

What is School Readiness?

School readiness means having the ability to learn and cope with the school environment without undue stress.

A few characteristics of children who are “ready for Kindergarten”:



1) **Social/ Emotional**

Ready to: separate from family; trust adults in school; learn how to share, to wait; assume responsibility and independence; handle situations, emotions, fears; & follow teacher's agenda.

2) **Intellectual**

Interested in: talking about ideas; print, math concepts - numbers, comparisons, shapes, alphabet letters; listening to stories and music; eager to learn and to engage in new activities.

3) **Physical**

Ready to: hold writing tools, use scissors, button and zip own clothing, attend to tasks for 15-20 minutes, toilet trained, etc.

How can parents help their child become ‘school ready’?

Social and Emotional Competence

- Ensure that children have some regular contact with another child or other children before they start school. Children have to be exposed to other children in order to learn how to make friends. Children who have been to day care or pre-school are more socially competent with peers than those who have not (Lamb, 2000).
- Introduce games that involve taking turns, such as playing on swings, hitting with a bat or jumping on a trampoline.
- Introduce games where children have to share or play cooperatively in order to attain a joint or an individual goal, such as making cakes and sharing coloured pencils.
- Introduce games of chance where children can learn to lose gracefully (such as board games like snakes and ladders) by observing others who lose without worrying about it, as well as experiencing it themselves.
- Encourage them to come up with a fair solution if conflict arises by sitting down and helping them sort through it.
- Make them aware of rules and the reasons for them, such as crossing the road only when the green man walks or that the person who divides the chocolate doesn't get to choose which piece s/he receives.
- Use positive labels to help build their self-esteem, such as ‘helpful’, ‘kind’, ‘responsible’, and ‘grown up’ and avoid using negative ones. Refer to negative behaviour in terms of the event (“That wasn't a very sensible thing to do”), rather than labelling the child's personality (“You're stupid”).



- If children see you being kind and helpful to your family and friends, they will learn from your behaviour. If you are often angry and solve conflict by shouting or being aggressive, children are also likely to imitate this way of responding (Hartup & van Lieshout, 1995).
- Notice if they do something pro-social or do something well. It is easy to take more notice when things are going wrong. Behaviour is more likely to change with praise than punishment.

Language

- Talk to children, ask them to tell you about events, listen to them and sing familiar songs with them.
- As part of everyday life, give them experience in simple instructions that can also help you, such as getting food out of fridge. Make sure you thank them and let them feel appreciated.
- Children are better readers when they have been read to a lot by their parents (a better predictor than if they read to themselves when young (Offord, 2001).
- Use different sorts of markers to draw and write, such as pens, pencils, chalk and sticks in the sand.

Physical and motor development

- Avoid junk food where possible.
- Make sure your child is well rested and has a balanced diet.
- Play ball games, skipping games, hopping games and organize obstacle courses.
- Limit TV viewing.
- Join kinder gym, little athletics, ballet or a soccer club.

General knowledge and skills

- Read to children.
- Talk with and listen to children.
- Visit museums, galleries, the beach, the park, go for walks or see friends.



There are specific skills that can help children to be 'school ready':

- Teach them to dress themselves.
- Ensure that they can manage the toilet by themselves.
- Teach them to tie their shoe laces, or are able to use Velcro, buckle or elastic sided shoes.
- Get them to pack away their games and toys after use.
- Give them little errands to help you, such as taking their clean clothes to their bedroom, so they learn to follow instructions.

