



# Ready, Set - Kindergarten!

## Family Guide for Preschool – Kindergarten Development



*Feelings About Self,  
Developing Relationships,  
& Controlling Emotions*

*One of six guides to help  
with readiness for school*



**Carolina  
Family  
Engagement  
Center**

*Equity, Opportunity & Excellence in Education*

***Readiness is not just ABC's or counting or knowing colors. Families need to be aware of ALL areas of their child's development – physical, emotional, language, and thinking.*** A child's emotional and social development is a critical part of their development. A child's social and emotional skills are the foundation of academic learning. The ability to sit, concentrate, share, and control one's temper all contribute to learning.

*For preschoolers and kindergartners, the highest form of research and learning is through play. When working on different aspects of emotional and social development, make it fun!*



Families provide a child with their very first opportunities to develop a relationship, communicate, and interact. As a caregiver, you model how to relate to the people around you. Readiness for school is developing a child's willing attitude and positive view of learning new things, not just gaining knowledge.

The more you know, the more you can help your child grow and gain readiness for school.

**There are six areas of growth and experience that research tells us are involved in helping a child progress and succeed.**

## **SIX AREAS OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**



The individual way each child learns  
(Approaches to Play and Learning)



Feelings about self, developing relationships, and controlling emotions  
(Emotional and Social Development)



Their motor development, nutrition, health/safety  
(Health and Physical Development)



Gaining the basics for reading, writing, and speaking  
(Language Development)



Exploring shapes, patterns, numbers, comparisons  
(Mathematical Thinking)



Learning to think, make decisions, solve problems  
(Cognitive Development)



This guide is one of six that offers a brief introduction to each area and provides a sample of the experiences and skills children need in order to be prepared to move through preschool, at three-, four-, and five-years of age.

All adults caring for children wear many hats. You must be a playmate, nurse, cook, coach, and teacher. This document is designed to help by giving:

- Examples of the experiences and typical range of skills your child should learn and be able to do at each level of development as they learn about emotions and relationships.
- Activities on how you can help your child at home.
- Additional resources for information and help.

**Every child progresses at a different rate and so the developmental indicators included here describe what a child generally achieves by the END of each age level.**

*These experiences and skills are drawn from the South Carolina Early Learning Standards ([https://www.scchildcare.org/media/55097/SC\\_ELS-second-edit.pdf](https://www.scchildcare.org/media/55097/SC_ELS-second-edit.pdf)) and the South Carolina College- and Career- Ready Standards (<https://ed.sc.gov/instruction/standards-learning/>).*

*Both guidelines were developed by numerous experts in learning, based on years of research, and after review and comment by the public.*



## Developing a Sense of Self



Children who develop a positive sense of self are more likely to try new things and work toward reaching goals. They tend to accept new challenges and feel more confident about their ability to handle problems or difficulties that they encounter.

**These Ready, Set steps include:**

### Age 3 Preschool

- Describe themselves (what they look like, things they can do, things they like or own).
- Express a sense of belonging to a group (such as “There’s Kim from my class.” “I’m a boy.”).
- Choose activities they like and name their favorite activities.
- Indicate positive feelings about themselves by showing and/or telling others about themselves, things they like, or things they have done.
- Express the belief that they can do many things.
- Try new activities and attempt new challenges.



### Age 4 Preschool

- Describe themselves in greater detail and accuracy (such as “My eyes are brown.” “I’m tall.” “I like baseball.”).
- Express awareness that they are members of different groups (such as family, school, church).
- Choose to spend more time on preferred activities, and express awareness of skills they are developing.
- Indicate positive feelings about themselves by showing and/or telling others about themselves, things they like, or things they have done.
- Express the belief that they can do many things.
- Stick with tasks even when they are challenging.

### Age 5 Kindergarten

- Show a willingness to learn new games and try new skills.
- Identify personal connection to places (such as home, school, neighborhood, town).
- Define “feelings” they are having (such as happy, sad, angry).
- Name healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings.
- Continue to participate/practice in activities after being unsuccessful in initial attempts.





## Developing a Sense of Self with Others



The social skills and relationships children form with others are important for their overall development. Through positive relationships with adults, preschool children learn to understand and care about others and develop skills that help them adjust to the demands they encounter when they are older.

**These Ready, Set steps include:**

### Age 3 Preschool

- Seek out trusted teachers and caregivers as needed (for emotional support, physical help, social encounters, problem solving, and approval).
- Given time, form positive relationships with new teachers or caregivers.
- Show ease and comfort in their exchanges with familiar adults and ask for assistance.
- Form and maintain friendships with a few other children.
- Be at ease and comfortable in the interactions with familiar children.
- Show awareness that their actions affect others (walk carefully around a child's block building).
- Work to solve conflicts, with guidance and support.

### Age 4 Preschool

- Seek out trusted teachers and caregivers as needed (for emotional support, physical help, social encounters, problem solving, and approval).
- Over time, form positive relationships with new teachers or caregivers.
- Use language effectively to continue conversations with familiar adults and to influence their behavior (ask for help, ask an adult to do something).
- Form and maintain friendships with other children of many different backgrounds and abilities.
- Have conversations with other children and influence another child's behavior (plan a game, decide how to share a toy).
- Balance their own needs with those of others in the group.
- Use different approaches to solve problems and conflicts with increasing independence.

### Age 5 Kindergarten

- Explore and create meaning through conversation, play-acting, questioning, and story-telling.
- Create and use longer sentences.
- Practice taking turns, listening to others, and speaking clearly.
- Explain personal ideas and build on the ideas of others by answering and relating to the comments.
- Participate in conversations with different partners about topics and texts in small and large groups.





## Learning About Feelings



Children learn to manage their feelings and impulses during their early years. Preschoolers' ability to regulate and manage emotions is still developing and it is not unusual for them to sometimes have difficulty controlling their feelings and expressing their emotions fittingly.

**These Ready, Set steps include:**

### Age 3 Preschool

- Express a range of emotions (happy, sad, fear, anger, disgust, shame, guilt, satisfaction, love) with their face, body, sounds, and words.
- Use different words or signs to more clearly express and manage feelings.
- Describe reasons for their feelings ("I'm sad because my friend is leaving." "That makes me mad when you do that.").



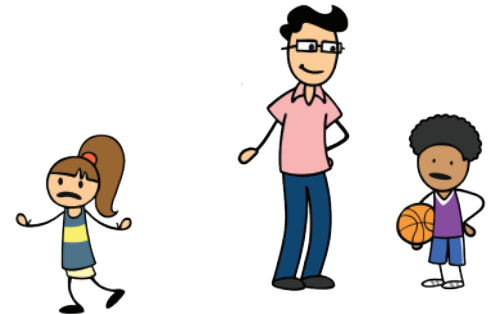
### Age 4 Preschool

- Express a range of emotions (happy, sad, fear, anger, disgust, shame, guilt, satisfaction, love) with their face, body, sounds, and words.
- Independently manage and express feelings effectively most of the time.
- Give reasons for their feelings that may include thoughts and beliefs as well as events (such as "I'm happy because I wanted to win and I did.").



### Age 5 Kindergarten

- Define the term "feelings" (happy, sad, angry).
- Name healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings.
- Explain ways to identify trustworthy adults to tell when someone is in need of help, feels threatened, or has been harmed.





## Learning At Home



**Your child's temperament plays a big role in how they respond, express their emotions, and relate to others. What worked with one child may not work with another as you help your preschooler learn to better deal with their feelings and those of others. Here are a few suggestions for working with your child.**

- Let your child know you are interested in their activities. Adults are so busy, they can often rush by without hearing what their child has to say or wants to do. Your interest builds your child's feelings of self-worth and you are modeling the behavior you wish them to display.
- Give your child some "tools" for handling his emotions in a positive way. Such tools can make it easier for the child to cool down and address the issue.
  - Help your child to recognize their emotions. Draw different faces on paper, plastic eggs, throw-away cups or whatever (happy, sad, confused, embarrassed, angry, proud). Have them choose the face that matches how they feel.
  - Develop a way for them to release negative feelings by squeezing a small ball or pounding play dough.
  - Make a list with your child of the actions they can use to relieve their feelings of frustration (such as: read a book, draw, take a bath, run around outside).





- Make a sock puppet for your child to tell their troubles to. Sometimes it is easier to talk to an object than with an adult.
- Let your child help with chores. Sorting and folding socks, putting up toys, getting the forks for dinner are some ideas to get you started. The task may not be done as fast or as well as you do it, but the responsibility and the helping are good lessons for your child.
- When your child's behavior is unacceptable be sure to separate them – as a person – from their behavior. Instead of calling them “bad,” describe the behavior that was wrong. This will clearly separate the action from the person and help maintain your child's sense of self-worth.
- Work with your child as they learn to play and work with others.
  - Suggest, when appropriate, that they turn to playmates for assistance or to get answers to their questions: “Your blocks didn't go high enough? Why don't you go ask Allen? He just built a really high building.”
  - Ask the preschooler to imagine how their behavior might affect others: “I saw you grab the doll from Amy. How do you think that made her feel?”
  - Encourage your child and friends to work together. “Kesha and Trish, will both of you please clean up the painting things?” “Why don't the two of you help me move these boxes?”





## Additional Information



If the ideas suggested above aren't your style, take a look at *Kiddie Matters* for its 100 suggestions: <https://www.kiddiematters.com/100-social-skills-activities-preschoolers/>.

For a helpful article on children's friendships, read "Ages and Stages: How Children Build Friendships" at [www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3747174](http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3747174).

What about controlling your temper so you are a good example? Take a look at this blog for some causes and ideas: <https://www.welcome-to-the-woods.com/learn-to-control-your-temper/>.

The website *We Do Listen* has 15 fun action cartoons on such topics as managing anger, telling the truth, getting along with others. Find the lessons at <https://wedolisten.org/lessons>.

Here is an article for working with an overly emotional child: <https://www.verywellfamily.com/how-to-help-an-overly-emotional-child-4157594>.

There are many apps for your computer or smart phone that will help you and your child consider feelings, friendships, and relationships. Try "Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame Street," "iTouchiLearn Feelings for Preschool Kids," and "Peppy Pals Social Skills." They are free.

This site lists apps specifically for children with disabilities, but all children can benefit from the listed sites: <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/social-emotional-apps-special-ed-jayne-clare>. Note – most of these apps carry a fee from \$0.99 to \$3.00.



## Additional Information



For an excellent discussion of social development between 3 and 5, go to <https://www.webmd.com/parenting/preschooler-social-development#1>.

Another good review is located at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/preschool/Pages/Social-Development-in-Preschoolers.aspx>.

The Center for Disease Control has an entire web site discussing various parenting skills. Start at <https://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/index.html> for information on communicating with your child, using time out, creating structure, giving directions, and using consequences.

Your public library has dozens and dozens of picture books to help and guide your child on most social-emotional areas. Such areas as sharing, empathy, shyness, and persistence are just a few of the topics addressed in books you can use to work with and amuse your child. For some suggestions, go to <https://childhood101.com/books-about-emotions/> for 16 book titles. With your older child, you can use the books to begin conversations about emotions and behavior.





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The Carolina Family Engagement Center is located in and coordinated through the University of South Carolina's SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) in the University of South Carolina's College of Education. Contact them at <https://cfec.sc.gov/> or 1-800-868-2232 or 1-803-777-7658.

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*CFEC is housed in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina and is funded through grant U310A180058 from the U.S. Department of Education.*

*This brochure was developed with the cooperation of:*

