



Ready, Set - Kindergarten!

Family Guide for Preschool – Kindergarten Development



Learning To Think,
Make Decisions,
Solve Problems

One of six guides to help
with readiness for school



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. Children have a great ability to learn and grow. Adults provide the best support for their child when they encourage their individual abilities and readiness to learn.

For preschoolers and kindergartners, the highest form of research and learning is through play. Make it fun!



Encourage your child to notice, watch, wonder, and ask questions about their surroundings. Young children play an active role in the development of their own ability to think, make decisions, and solve problems. Adults support this development by providing interesting materials and experiences, and by giving encouragement. 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.

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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 in gaining the basics for mathematical thinking.
- 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) 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.



Thinking & Reasoning



Preschool children develop their own questions about the world around them and how it works. As with other areas of development, thinking and reasoning can be broadened with everyday activities and challenges. Help your child examine specific concepts about themselves, animals, plants, weather, and the physical world.

These Ready, Set steps include:

Age 3 Preschool

- Explore objects, tools, and materials thoroughly to learn about their characteristics (height, weight, examine objects from the top to the bottom).
- Express knowledge gathered by their senses using play, art, language (show understanding that one rock is heavier than another, that sticks can be made shorter or longer).
- Enjoy fantasy and make-believe, and can sometimes distinguish imagination from reality (person behind the mask remains the same person).
- Apply what is known about everyday experiences to new situations (look for a seatbelt on the bus).
- Ask questions about why things happen and try to understand cause and effect.
- Use words like “think” and “know” to talk about thoughts and beliefs.

Age 4 Preschool

- Explore objects, tools, and materials thoroughly to learn about their characteristics (height, weight, examine objects from the top to the bottom).
- Express knowledge gathered by their senses using play, art, language (show understanding that one rock is heavier than another, that sticks can be made shorter or longer).
- Know imagination from reality (recognize that a fantasy story could not be real).
- Improve the ability to make predictions and explain why things happen using what they know.
- Think about and imagine what might happen next.
- Understand that others may have different thought, beliefs, or feelings than their own (“I like ketchup and you don’t.”).

Age 5 Kindergarten

- With help, use tools to communicate findings.
- With help, develop a plan for collecting information from several sources through play, observing, and conversations.
- With help, select information, revise ideas, and communicate findings.
- With help, ask and answer questions to make predictions, using prior knowledge, pictures, information about parts of a book.
- Explain personal ideas and build on the ideas of others by responding and relating to comments made.





Creative Expression



Painting, coloring, writing, making music, and making crafts are all creative activities. Such activities offer one of the best ways for your preschooler to express themselves. While sometimes it may look like they are just making a mess, children learn to think and solve problems through their creativity. Art can teach your child something as simple as just letting mistakes go when they happen. Art will also help with motor skills and teach your preschooler how to make a decision as they pick out colors or their supplies.

These Ready, Set steps include:

Age 3 Preschool

- Express pleasure in different forms of art (prefers a book or chooses to listen to music).
- Participate in and express themselves through creative experiences such as art, music, dance, dramatic play.
- Show awareness of different musical instruments, rhythms, and tunes as they participate in musical activities.



Age 4 Preschool

- Express pleasure in different forms of art (prefers a book or chooses to listen to music).
- Participate in and express themselves through creative experiences such as art, music, dance, dramatic play.
- Recall and imitate different tones, rhythms, rhymes, and songs as they participate in musical activities.



Age 5 Kindergarten

- Explore dance movements that communicate feelings or ideas.
- Use their own ideas in creating art.
- Begin to play two or more differing rhythm patterns.
- Start, change, and stop movement in response to a rhythm.





Social Connections



Links to family and friends and the interaction with peers and adults greatly impact the development of preschoolers' thinking, decision making and communication skills. At these stages, children begin to show knowledge of roles within families, homes, classrooms, and communities. They also begin to learn acceptance of similarities and differences between themselves and others.

These Ready, Set steps include:

Age 3 Preschool

- Talk about family members, name their relationships to each other, and describe family routines ("Marike is my sister." "My grandpa takes care of me in the afternoon.")
- Identify and talk about the roles of community helpers (police, firefighters).
- Know self as a part of a specific family, preschool class or other group ("That's my family." "I'm in Ms. Emily's class.")
- Show acceptance of people who are different from themselves and of people who are similar.
- Notice and talk about weather conditions.



Age 4 Preschool

- Talk about a wide circle of family members and other people important to the family and their relationships to each other.
- Recognize and identify a wide variety of community helpers, (police, firefighters, doctors, teachers).
- Know self as a part of several groups (family, preschool class, church, play group).
- Show acceptance of people who are different from themselves and of people who are similar.
- Watch and talk about how people adjust to seasons and weather conditions (wear a raincoat, put on a sweater).

Age 5 Kindergarten

- Compare the daily lives of children and their families in the past and the present.
- Identify people at school and in the community who enforce rules and laws.
- Identify personal connections to places, including home, school, neighborhood, and town.
- Ask and answer questions about the natural world ("What makes rain?" "Why is it cold in winter?")





Scientific Exploration & Knowledge

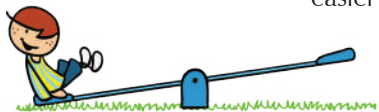


For preschool children, think of “science” as supporting their natural curiosity to explore and discover the world around them. Children at this age are quite able to understand scientific concepts and to develop scientific thinking. “Scientific thinking” involves seven skills—observe, compare, sort and organize, predict, experiment, evaluate, and apply—and preschool children refine these skills as they develop.

These Ready, Set steps include:

Age 3 Preschool

- Notice and describe the traits of plants and animals (looks, behavior, where it is found).
- Notice and describe materials and changes in substances (water freezes, mud hardens, metal gets hot).
- Represent what is learned during exploration through drawing, modeling, building, movement.
- With help, use simple tools to investigate objects and materials (ramps for rolling balls and cars).
- Describe and predict changes that take place when mixing and/or working with materials (stirring together chocolate syrup and milk; seeing what floats and what does not).



Age 4 Preschool

- Describe some things plants and animals need to live and grow (sunlight, water, food).
- Notice, describe, and try to explain materials and changes in substances (metal railing gets hot with sunlight, ice melts as it warms).
- Represent what is learned during exploration through drawing, modeling, building, movement.
- Work with the environment to produce desired effects and find solutions to problems (mix paint colors to create a different color).
- Examine the results of an attempted solution and use new information to solve a problem (tie a string to a toy to make it easier to pull).



Age 5 Kindergarten

- Develop explanations of events using observations, measurements, and investigations (see what happens when a plant gets no water, compare the heat of a spoon in the sun to one in the shade).
- Develop and use models to understand events, processes, and relationships or to test answers (put different numbers of stones in a boat to see how many it can hold before it sinks).
- Analyze and interpret information from observing, measuring, or investigating to understand patterns and meanings (roll different size balls down ramp to see which rolls faster).
- Examine results of a solution to a problem and communicate what was seen (report that a longer string was needed to pull the toy easily).



Learning At Home



Learning happens all the time, not only at home or in a classroom. Use your surroundings to encourage early science experiences are important to your child's educational growth and development. You can help your children to think critically, problem solve, and better understand the world around them.

The most important activity you can do to help your child succeed is to talk WITH your child. Conversation is critical to language and brain development. It is the practice in communicating that makes all the difference. Take turns talking, practice eye contact, and model for them how to answer questions with complete thoughts.

Let even your youngest child make decisions. It might take them some time, but “evaluating” whether to play with the blue ball or the red ball, what candy to choose, or whether to color or read aids in their thinking skills.

Your child is already driving you crazy asking “why” questions all day. Take advantage of this curiosity. Search for the answer with your child, look it up in a book, online, or ask a friend. See what the information from different sources adds about the subject for the two of you.

Take your child to a zoo or museum. If one is not available in your area, go online and visit in that way. Some museums offer virtual tours and you can view, learn, and talk about many, many things with your child. Try the Smithsonian Natural History Museum: <https://naturalhistory.si.edu/about/virtual-tour>. The San Diego Zoo has live web cameras of many animals to view: <https://kids.sandiegozoo.org/videos>. Or visit other online sites for pictures, short tours, and explanations, such as: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NASA Space Museum, Toyota Automobile Museum.

Memory games are always fun. Use a pack of child game cards or regular cards. Have your child: a) identify an item or several items; b) remember the items; c) look for a matching item; d) identify when a match is found.



Outside, ask your child about leaves. "What is different about them?" "Are they the same?" "Are they green in the fall?" "Why do they fall off some trees in winter?" Cut several flowers or grasses. Put some in water and leave others without. Ask your child to tell you what happens over time. "What was the difference?"

Try to make square (or heart shaped) bubbles. Make or buy bubble liquid. Make different shapes out of pipe cleaners or other bendable material and see what happens when you use them to make bubbles. Make a chart and record what shape the bubble becomes when blown through the different shapes.



Play charades or "20 Questions" or "I Spy." Play verbal games such as "Follow my directions" (jump three times, climb under the table, sit in the chair and sing) or "Guess what?" ("What has four legs and a hairy tail?")

Use everyday opportunities to show - and model - sympathetic feelings for other people.

If you observe someone in distress (in real life, on TV, or in a book), talk with your child about how that person must feel. Ask your child if they would help. But first, ask them to think about the person in distress, and rate how sad or upset the person is likely to be. This helps your child to be conscious of others. Even a very brief conversation might have an effect.

One of the best ways to encourage understanding is to make children aware of what they have in common with others. Arrange for your child to meet people from different backgrounds. If that is not possible, books and TV travel shows help to learn about what life is like in faraway places. But it is important for your child to have contact with people who aren't like you.

Preschoolers often misinterpret facial expressions. To help with this, show them photographs of people displaying different emotions (happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust). You and your child can "try on" the different emotions. and do a little play acting.



Additional Information



Try this site based in Ireland for several fun activities for observing and predicting: <https://www.mykidstime.com/things-to-do/18-easy-science-experiments-perfect-for-preschoolers/>. Take a look at the rest of the site for advice on general preschooler issues and parenting as well as general fun things to do.

In addition to virtual tours, the San Diego Zoo has a kids' site: <https://kids.sandiegozoo.org/>. Visit it for fun information, activities, and stories about animals.

“Parenting Science” (<https://www.parentingscience.com/social-skills-activities.html>) offers tips, activities, and advice on a number of parenting and development issues. The site also provides numerous references for further information and research.

Use rhymes for learning, math, language, and reading skills. This site gives the rhyme and lists activities based on the rhyme to help familiarize your child with various skills. Although it is aimed at teachers, any adult can use its ideas: <https://www.brighthubeducation.com/preschool-lesson-plans/124587-using-nursery-rhymes-to-teach/>.

Never underestimate the ideas, explanations, and social/emotional situations covered by children's books in your public library. Fun stories on everything from understanding others' feelings, to a character's first day at preschool, to controlling emotions are addressed in them. There are also books to foster curiosity on any subject from jellyfish to zebras to motorcycles to Native American tribes.

Also check your public library for fun activities for your preschooler. Many have great programs and arts and crafts activities that help your child get ready for kindergarten.



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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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