



Ready, Set - Kindergarten!

Family Guide for Preschool – Kindergarten Development



Physical Growth, Nutrition,
& Health/Safety

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. Children have a great ability to learn and grow. Adults provide the best support for their child when they encourage healthy eating habits and provide for their children to get plenty of rest and exercise.

Remember, each child develops at their own pace, but learning comes most easily when they are well fed, get exercise, and feel safe.



The physical growth, nutrition, self-care, and safety practices your child learns now impacts their future health and well-being. Children benefit from a variety of activities that require them to use both large and small motor skills (such as running, jumping, and using a crayon or puzzle piece). 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 through play.
- 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.



Develop Healthy Sleeping & Eating Habits



Sleep, getting sufficient sleep, is an important part of a healthy life. Preschoolers need enough rest and sleep so they can be physically active and develop strength and stamina. They also need enough sleep to be able to concentrate, learn, and remember.

Your child grows and develops best when they have a healthy and balanced diet that promotes their physical growth and health. But more than this, healthy eating supports memory, problem solving, and decision-making.

These Ready, Set steps include:

Age 3 Preschool

- Use simple gestures and words to show tired or sleepy (child says “night-night”).
- With guidance, start and participate in sleep routines.
- Try new foods.
- Feed themselves using utensils and hands.
- Know that some foods are good for them (banana, milk, peas) and some are not healthy (potato chips, candy).

Age 4 Preschool

- Explain ways sleep keeps us healthy and makes us feel good.
- Independently start and participate in sleep routines most of the time.
- Try new foods.
- Feed themselves independently with utensils.
- Talk about the variety and amount of foods needed to be healthy (can identify what is missing from their meal).



Age 5 Kindergarten

- Explain why getting enough sleep is important.
- Independently start and participate in activities that impact personal health (washing hands, brushing teeth, bathing).
- Explain why the body needs food and water.
- Define the terms “healthy foods” and “snacks”.





Engage in Active Physical Play



Preschool children begin to think mathematically as they sort, describe, and create simple patterns. They start to see how numbers can be taken apart and put together. They also learn to identify different shapes, size, and direction and learn the positions of objects.

These Ready, Set steps include:

Age 3 Preschool

- Spend time engaged in active physical play indoors and out.
- Participate in simple games and other organized motor activities that promote physical fitness (for example: songs with movement or throwing and catching).
- Choose a variety of planned and free time physical activities indoors and outdoors.

Age 4 Preschool

- Spending more time engaged in active physical play indoors and out for extended periods of time.
- Participate in planned and unplanned motor activities to build strength, speed, flexibility, and coordination (chase, kick ball).
- Communicate ways physical activity keeps us healthy and makes us feel good.

Age 5 Kindergarten

- Sustain moderate to vigorous physical activity that increases heart and breathing rate.
- Participate willingly in individual and group physical activities.
- Engage in sustained physical activity that causes an increased heart rate and rapid breathing.



Motor Development – Large Muscles

Large motor development involves the stronger muscle groups of the body in the arms, legs, and trunk. These muscles perform the everyday functions, such as standing, walking, running, and sitting upright. Large motor development also includes eye-hand coordination skills such as ball skills (throwing, catching, kicking). As a child's bones and muscles strengthen they are able to move, touch, and interact with their surroundings.

These Ready, Set steps include:

Age 3 Preschool

- Refine movements and show generally good coordination.
- Demonstrate large muscle control by throwing balls accurately, sliding down slides, pedaling riding toys.
- Move in space with good coordination (running, hopping in place, galloping).



Age 4 Preschool

- Perform complex movements smoothly (skipping, hopping from one place to another).
- Move quickly through the environment and stop (run fast, pedal fast).
- Show awareness of self and other people and objects while moving.



Age 5 Kindergarten

- Move with control both forward and sideways using a variety of skills (run, jump, hop, slide) and change directions.
- Support body weight while maintaining stillness (for example, balancing on two hands and a foot).
- Move in a controlled manner to avoid contact with people and objects and able to stop on command.



Motor Development – Small Muscles

Small motor control (fine motor development) involves the finger, thumb, and hand muscles. During these stages, a child is developing their fine motor skills when they use their hands to play with blocks, puzzles, crayons and button, tie, and put on their clothes. Development in this area, along with hand-eye coordination, enables us to use objects and work with tools. These are the skills needed for drawing, writing, cutting, and threading, and which are used later in building, engineering, cooking, sewing, crafts, or playing musical instruments.

These Ready, Set steps include:

Age 3 Preschool

- Draw simple shapes and figures (squares, circles, triangles).
- Engage in activities that require hand-eye coordination (mold clay, work with smaller puzzle pieces).
- Use tools that require strength, control, and agility (forks, safety scissors, crayons, tweezers).



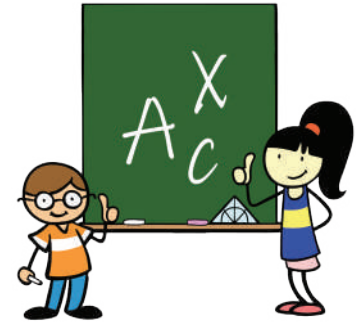
Age 4 Preschool

- Draw smaller figures with more detail (faces with features, letter-like forms).
- Engage in complex hand-eye coordination activities with some precision and control (cut shapes, put together small pieces).
- Use tools that require strength and agility with some control (spray bottle, hole puncher).



Age 5 Kindergarten

- Age 5 indicators do not address this area specifically.





Self-Care for Self & Environment



Children at these ages become more and more independent. They develop an awareness of their needs and they learn to better communicate their needs. This needs awareness grows in importance throughout life. Learning to maintain physical health, balance work and family, and control emotions are all skills begun in preschool.

These Ready, Set steps include:

Age 3 Preschool

- Use words, signs or body language to ask for the things needed (food when hungry, drink when thirsty, go outdoors to be physically active).
- Use different strategies to calm themselves when needed (deep breathing, quiet corner, self-talk).
- With reminders, follow basic cleanliness practices (throw tissues away, wash hands, flush toilet).
- Help with the routine care of the indoor and outdoor learning area (recycle, pick up trash, care for garden).

Age 4 Preschool

- Use language to ask adults or peers for the specific type of help needed in a particular situation.
- Consistently use strategies to calm themselves when needed.
- Describe the value of good health practices (wash hands to get rid of germs, drink milk to build strong bones).
- Perform tasks to maintain the indoor and outdoor learning area independently.

Age 5 Kindergarten

- Explain ways to identify trustworthy adults who can help in dealing with personal feelings.
- Name healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings.
- Name behaviors that impact personal health (for example: bathing, washing hands, eating healthy foods).





Safety Awareness



When children are young, they need constant adult supervision and guidance. As they grow older they show greater independence and begin to develop the skills to help them remain safe in everyday situations. It is important to introduce safety skills early, in a fun, non-scary way to raise children's awareness of their environment and build confidence and capability to respond to strangers and unsafe scenarios.

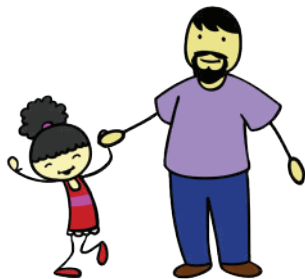
These Ready, Set steps include:

Age 3 Preschool

- Know what their body can do and play within their abilities to avoid injury to self or others.
- Usually recognize and avoid objects and situations that might cause harm.
- With reminders, follow basic cleanliness practices (throw tissues away, wash hands, flush toilet).
- Usually follow established safety rules.
- Call a trusted adult when someone gets injured or is in an unsafe situation.

Age 4 Preschool

- Avoid potentially dangerous behaviors.
- Usually recognize and avoid objects, substances and activities that might cause harm.
- Usually follow established safety rules.
- Identify people who can help them in the community (police, firefighter, nurse).



Age 5 Kindergarten

- Identify ways to prevent common childhood injuries at home (falling down stairs, finding a knife), at school (climbing on playground equipment), or elsewhere (running across the street, approaching an unknown animal).
- Regularly recognize and avoid objects, medicines, and activities that might cause harm (such as household cleaners with a warning label).
- Describe fire safety rules for home and school (get out of burning buildings and meet in a safe place, do not play with fire).
- Identify situations that require action to protect personal safety.



Learning At Home



Children this age often need encouragement to play, eat healthy foods, and learn safety practices. Studies indicate that active play (exercise) helps a child emotionally as well as physically. There is evidence that eating behaviors and meal habits in early childhood have an impact on children's food preferences and eating patterns in adulthood.

Get your child to MOVE. Yes, they have a lot of energy at this age, but they need to be active in a way that works their muscles. Games that make them hop, jump, somersault, and run are great. Hopscotch, Simon Says, races, playing catch are all useful for a “workout.” Or try “musical chairs.”

Together with your child, set up an obstacle course using chairs, pillows, tables, or boxes. Have them run, crawl, or hop around the course. “Time” them to see how fast they can finish the course. Use a large box or two sticks as a goal and start up kicking practice.

To work on fine motor skills, work with clay, mold sand, string beads or buttons, and finger paint. Cut snowflakes, leaves, flowers, footballs, or starfish out of paper plates, food boxes, old magazines; then color and trace with crayons, chalk, or pencils.

Let your child tear up paper from magazines, construction paper, or old books. Paste the pieces on a sheet of paper to make pictures.

Many children in this age range are picky eaters so here are some tips for getting them to eat and eating a larger variety of food.

- Avoid cooking them a separate meal. Children often mimic the adults' behavior, so eventually they'll eat most of the food served.
- Give them a range of foods, even if your child sometimes refuses to eat anything on the plate. It's normal to want your child to eat at meals, but remember, skipping one meal will not harm them. Let your child know food will be available



Learning At Home (cont.)



at the next regular meal or snack time. A child at this age shouldn't be getting their own snacks, but they can be given a choice and allowed to decide whether to eat or not.

- Some children resist new foods automatically. If this is the case, introduce new foods slowly. Tell your child that their taste buds sometimes have to get used to a flavor before they'll like the taste. Try a little hero worship. Suggest that their favorite cartoon character eats peas or green beans.
- Let your child become involved in choosing or preparing meals, they'll be more interested in eating what they've created. Take them to the store, and let them choose produce for you. If they're old enough, allow them to cut up vegetables and mix them into a salad.

Practice safety rules around the house – specifically, knowing and rehearsing a fire escape route. Work with them to learn when they should call 911 and how to give their name and address, or how to say “no” to a stranger that might invite them into a car or give them candy without your permission.

Once the safety rules have been practiced, rehearse them so they become second nature. Turn this into a game by giving your children a situation and asking them what they should do. For example: “What would you do if you couldn't find me in the store?” “What would you do if someone knocked on the front door while I was in the bathroom?” “What would you do if an adult you don't know asked you to sit on their lap?”





Additional Information



First School offers activities and crafts in many areas and themes. Try <http://www.first-school.ws/theme/nutrition.htm> for fun ways to learn about good eating habits. It has everything from children's books to read to food helpers to recipes for you and your child to try.

ChildFun also offers ideas for your preschooler/kindergartener in many areas. Activities and crafts on health and hygiene can be found at https://www.childfun.com/themes/people/health-and-hygiene/#Health_and_Hygiene_Games_and_Activities and https://www.childfun.com/themes/food/nutrition/#Nutrition_Games_and_Activities.

The Healthy Children site is sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics and contains several articles and ideas on nutrition and fitness: vitamins, eating out, overweight preschoolers, and sample menu. Check it out at: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/preschool/nutrition-fitness/Pages/default.aspx>. In Spanish: <https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/ages-stages/preschool/nutrition-fitness/paginas/default.aspx>.

For 25 games to get your child moving, check out: <https://mommypoppins.com/newyorkcitykids/25-exercise-games-indoor-activities-for-kids>.

While this site is written for teachers, it offers some ideas for indoor rainy day activities you can adapt for home: <https://www.pre-kpages.com/indoor-recess-games-and-activities-for-preschoolers/>.

If these sites don't get you and your child moving, try this Pinterest board for heaps of ideas: <https://www.pinterest.com/personalizednamebooks/physical-activities-for-preschoolers/>.

For ideas on safety activities, try <https://www.brighthubeducation.com/preschool-lesson-plans/108706-being-safe-and-calling-9-1-1/>.



Equity, Opportunity & Excellence in Education

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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