

Getting your child ready for Kindergarten

If your child will be starting kindergarten in the fall, you may be wondering what you can do to ensure that she is prepared. The good news is that you have been preparing her since the day she was born.

Your child learns through play, by watching and imitating you, and by exploring the world around him. Every new discovery and every new skill learned prepares him for the next step on his learning journey.

Opportunities for learning are everywhere, and they are easy to incorporate into everyday activities.

Your child likely learned the order of the alphabet by singing the ABC's. Recognizing letters in print is a little harder, so start with the first letter in your child's name. This is her special letter, and you can find it everywhere; in books, on signs, on packaging or flyers. Once she knows this letter you can move on to other letters in her name and the rest of the alphabet, one letter at a time.

Shawna Munro PARENTING POINTS

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When your child draws pictures with circles and lines, he is preparing himself to print letters. Print your child's name, family members' names and simple words with a highlighter marker and let your child trace them as an introduction to printing.

Count everything. Count towels as you fold laundry, count apples as you bag them at the store, count the number of steps from the bathroom to

the bedroom. Count backwards from five as you get ready to move from one activity to the next.

Demonstrate basic math in conversations with your child. "We need four plates at the table. Here are three. How many more do we need?" "You had five slices of cucumber and you ate two. How many do you have left?"

Give your child lots of practice using scissors and crayons. Keep an art box stocked with scrap paper or

cardboard for drawing, junk mail or catalogues for cutting and pasting, and used envelopes for stuffing. Art activities build strength and precision in hands and fingers, and nurture creativity and imagination. Always keep in mind that for children, art should be about the process, not a perfect final product.

Read together every day and expose your child to books. When you look at books together, talk about the pictures. Find ways to relate

the story to your child's experiences. "The monkeys in the story remind me of the ones we saw at the zoo." "I wonder what those monkeys will do next." Give your child a chance to think and talk about the story. Let your child tell a familiar story in her own words. Encourage her as she memorizes and "reads" sections of a story.

Practice social skills by taking turns and sharing, and playing games like follow the leader. Expose your child to

other children his age by having play dates with friends, going to the playground or attending a playgroup.

Kindergarten will offer your child many new experiences and opportunities to build knowledge and skills, but this is just an extension of the many things you are able to do at home. As a parent, you are your child's first and most important teacher and with your help she will develop the confidence to learn and succeed in school and in life.

