

First Things First's Top 10 Ways to Help Your Child Prepare for Kindergarten

Summertime is a great opportunity to help kids prepare for their first day of kindergarten. Today's schools expect 5-year-olds to arrive with basic academic and social skills so they are prepared on day one to start learning to read, write and do basic math. Fun, everyday activities help kids develop basic skills.

First Things First has tip sheets to help parents prepare their kids over the summer for their first day of school and success beyond. These resources can be found at azftf.gov in the Parent Section under Early Education.

Below are the top 10 things to do with your child to prepare him or her for kindergarten.

1. **Reading** - Read with your child at least 20 minutes per day. Try books that repeat words about familiar objects; involve activities like counting, identifying colors, objects or letters; or, are about things your child likes. Ask questions about the story like, "What do you think happens next?"
2. **Talking** - Talk and sing with your child everywhere – at home, in the car, at the store. Make up stories or songs about your outings.
3. **Routines** - Help your child get used to the structure of the school day by establishing regular routines for waking up and dressing, meal times, and bath and bed times. Do a test-run of the big day by practicing all the activities that will happen at school. This will help overcome any fears. Include waking up at the scheduled time, walk to the bus stop and talk about where to sit. If you drive, talk about landmarks on the way. Pack a lunch and practice opening things together.
4. **Early writing** - Writing begins with scribbling. Give your child safe writing tools to play with, like crayons, chalk or markers and blank paper. Ask your child to tell you about their drawings. Use salt or coffee grounds as a tactile way to practice writing alphabet letters.
5. **Healthy breakfast** - Start every day with a healthy breakfast. It helps kids concentrate.
6. **Sleeping** - Make sure your child gets 8-10 hours of sleep every night.
7. **Staying healthy** - Schedule a visit with your child's doctor and dentist. Health problems make concentrating difficult.
8. **Sharing** - Teach your child how to share and let them help you clean up so they get used to putting things back where they found them.
9. **Hygiene** - Teach your child how to use the bathroom by themselves, to wash their hands after going to the bathroom and before eating, to blow their nose and sneeze into their elbow.
10. **Talk change** - Start talking to your child about the change that is coming when they start school. Be positive, and give your child the opportunity to ask questions or express fears. Read books with your child about starting kindergarten.

If you don't have kindergarteners this year, it's never too early to start helping kids prepare. Children who have positive experiences from birth to 5 are more likely to be prepared when they start kindergarten and do well in school. By turning everyday moments into learning moments, we can help our children develop the skills and the love of learning that will help them succeed in school and in life!

More tips and information for supporting your child's health and learning can be found at azftf.gov in the Parents section.