

9 Ways to Help Make Your Child's Transition to Kindergarten Easier!

1. Practice kindergarten skills.

Over the summer, practice activities your child will be doing in class, like forming letters and holding a pencil. It's fine if your child hasn't mastered these skills when school starts. But it can ease stress for your child—and help the teacher—if the kindergarten classroom isn't the first place your child tries these tasks.

Kindergartners also cut out lots of shapes. If your child hasn't used kid-friendly scissors yet, now's a good time to try them out.

2. Set clear bedtime and morning routines.

There's a good chance your child will have a new morning routine with the start of kindergarten. Maybe it's an earlier wake-up time, or having to be outside and ready for the school bus.

Depending on your morning schedule, it may help to move bedtime to an earlier time. Children need 10-11 hours of sleep per night. Before school starts, run through the morning routine with your child, too. Practice having your child wake up on time, get dressed, and eat breakfast.

Will you be the one getting your child out the door? If not, have the caregiver who will be handling mornings with your child try out the routine a couple of times.

3. Start phasing out nap time.

Many kindergarten classes have rest time. But if your child still takes naps, this break will probably be shorter than the naps your child is used to. Start cutting the length of nap time by a couple of minutes a day before school starts. (A shorter nap might help with the change to an earlier bedtime, too.)

4. Make following directions fun.

Kids in kindergarten are expected to follow directions throughout the school day, and they won't always get to do what they want to do. Practice this at home in fun ways. Have your child do activities with one- and two-step directions before school starts. You can do crafts or play new games together. Or you could have your child help when you're cooking.

5. Ask how your child is feeling.

Kindergarten is different from other grades because there are a lot of firsts. It's a big unknown that can make kids feel anxious. Help your child get through the first-day jitters—and bigger worries—by talking. Ask things like, "What do you want to know about kindergarten?" Or, "You seem a little nervous. What are you thinking about?"

It might be hard for your child to understand or express these feelings. But asking questions and showing empathy lets your child know you're there.

6. Practice asking for help.

Your child may be nervous about needing help at school. That might be with personal things like going to the bathroom independently or getting ready to leave at the end of the day. Explain that the teacher is always there to help if there's a problem—and that it's OK to ask. Have your child practice asking for help before the school year starts. This helps kids build confidence to speak up for what they need when they need it.

7. Read together.

Reading to your child as often as possible helps lay the foundation for kindergarten learning. It also helps prepare kids for listening in the classroom. Discover books that are good for kids starting kindergarten. And get tips on what to do if you don't have time to read with your child.

8. Introduce new friends.

Arrange for your child to play with kids the same age. Try to branch out beyond kids your child already knows from preschool or the neighborhood. Set it up to take place in a space where both kids will be comfortable. This might be one of your homes or a playground. The local library also offers story time. This is a great place to meet new friends that may be in their class!

9. Remind your child of strengths.

Some kids worry about not being "good enough" at doing things. Explain that kindergarten is all about trying new things and working to get better at old things. Talk about things your child has done and learned in the past. Point out past successes, whether it was learning to tie shoes or catching a ball.

The transition to kindergarten can take a little while, and there may be ups and downs. But a little preparation can make a big difference in how your child feels about starting school.