

4-5 years



Live
Love
Grow
Learn

Preschoolers are learning how the world around them works. **They want to please others, but need to know how. Work on skills your child will need at the start of Kindergarten.**

- Practice self-help skills daily: using a zipper, wiping his nose, putting on a coat.
- Plan play dates with other children. Attend pre-school classes. Join a play group.
- Talk about feelings – his and others.
- Teach and reinforce rules of positive behavior.

Children learn as they watch their parents. Be a good role model.

Meals

Healthy eating improves a child's chance for school success.

- Avoid power struggles. Do not make food and eating an issue. Your preschooler may eat more during growth spurts. He may refuse foods he has been eating.
- Offer 3 healthy meals plus snacks – daily. Serve all food groups.
- Avoid buying junk food.
- Let your child see you eat a variety of healthy food.
- Encourage your child to eat new fruits and vegetables. Serve them more than once. Prepare them in different ways.
- Serve kid-friendly portions.
- Make mealtime fun. Eat together as a family.

Making Friends

Friends make children feel like they belong. They boost self-esteem and provide support. Some children make friends easier than others. Pro-social skills help.

- Scheduled playdates. Ask your child who he wants to invite.
- Know your child's strengths and weaknesses. If she is shy, invite one playmate at a time. If he has trouble sharing, put away his favorite toys before kids arrive.
- Talk about sharing and taking turns - before children arrive.
- Provide some scheduled activities like playing a game. Leave time for free play.
- Supervise the play group. Watch situations unfold, but be prepared to step in and calmly model how to solve disputes.

Read a children's book, together, about making friends.

Reading

Reading is one of the most important activities you can do with your child. Reading, listening, understanding and speaking skills help your child succeed in school and beyond.

- Read to your child for 20 to 30 minutes daily.
- Relax as you read. Snuggle in a cozy place.
- Make reading time fun.
- Use your voice and facial expressions to reflect emotions in the story.
- Ask your child questions. *"What do you think will happen next?"*
- Run your fingers along the words as you read.
- Point out words. Talk about pictures.
- Encourage your child to rhyme words. For example, if you read cat, ask: *"What rhymes with cat?"*
- Read books your child likes.
- Place books within your child's reach.
- Keep a bag of books with you wherever you go. When you have to wait – read a book.





Self-Help and Independence

Learning self-help skills increases a child's self-esteem. Parents instill a "You can do it" attitude when they teach and allow their children to care for themselves, others and their home.

- Expect your child to learn and perform age-appropriate tasks.
- Start with one task at a time. Explain how the task is done. Practice the task. Be patient as she perfects it. Expect setbacks.
- Give praise.
- Resist the urge to redo what your child has done.

Teach your 4 – 5-year-old these self-help skills.

- Dress and undress.
- Put on and tie his shoes.
- Wipe up spills.
- Take a shower and wash her hair.
- Remove dishes and utensils from the table.
- Set the table.
- Put some of his clean clothes away.
- Make a sandwich.
- Learn emergency phone numbers.



Over Scheduling

Too many structured activities reduce a child's thinking skills — planning, problem-solving, making decisions and regulating thoughts and actions. Free play helps kids:

- Foster creativity and imagination skills.
- Learn to make decisions.
- Improve their ability take turns and share.
- Develop skills to resolve conflicts.
- Control their emotions.

Free play helps the brain make connections between nerve cells, needed for gross and fine motor skills.

Children also need time to rest and relax. Kids who are stressed may have sleep problems. Balance your child's structured activities that include time for free play.

Nurturing Home

A child learns best when he feels safe and loved.

- Create a peaceful home. Do not argue or yell.
- Treat each family member with respect. No name calling. No bullying.
- Have fun together – laugh, play, eat meals. visit museums, attend community events.
- Praise each other.
- Listen when your child talks. Try to understand what she is trying to say.
- Say, "I love you" every day.

Support • New Ideas • Referrals

Call Parent Help Line at 217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week.

Visit our website at www.parenthelpline.org and our

Facebook page:

Parent Help Line at St. John's Children's Hospital

More Ideas To Prepare Your Child for Kindergarten

Is Your Preschooler Ready for Kindergarten?

Starting Kindergarten is a big step. Parents want their child to be ready. Children need to know more than colors, numbers and ABC's as they start school.

Your child also needs:

- **Positive social skills.** Can she get along and interact with others? Can he play and work with other children in a group setting?
- **Self-control.** Can he obey the rules? Can he listen without interrupting? Is he patient? Kids often have to wait their turn for a toy, activity or in line.
- **The ability to follow two or three step directions.**
- **Fine motor skills.** Can he hold and use crayons and pencils? Can he use scissors?
- **Communication skills.** Can she tell the teacher what she needs and wants.
- **Self-help skills.** Can he put on and take off his coat, use the restroom and wash his hands without help?
- **Respect for others and items that belong to someone else.**

Studies show that delaying Kindergarten, for a child who is old enough to attend, does not increase his ability to perform in school. Talk to your child's doctor, preschool teacher and child care provider to help determine if your child is ready to start Kindergarten.

Show Support for Your Child's Education and School.

Research shows that when parents are positively involved in their child's education, their kids do better in school. When your child attends pre-school and school:

- Meet his teacher. Express your support for the school and education.
- Attend parent meetings and school activities – open house, family night, parent-teacher conferences.
- Call the teacher if you have concerns and questions. Do not wait until the end of the year to address concerns.
- Talk to her about your visits to her school. Say positive words. Show excitement.
- Never let him hear you make negative comments about his school or education.
- Read papers that teachers send home. Look in your child's back pack, *daily*, for notes from teachers.
- Volunteer - if time permits.

All parents face similar challenges. Be kind to other parents. Show respect. Make friends. Your children repeat what they see and hear. Make your words and actions positive and respectful.

Visit Parent Help Line

www.parenthelpline.org.

Find new ideas that help you keep your family safe, healthy and happy.

- Search for tips on parenting babies, toddlers, school age children and teens.
- Find information on early learning and school readiness. Read the *Live Love Grow Learn* booklets and *Ready In Stages* checklists to promote your baby's healthy growth and development.
- Learn how to teach your child skills that help with school and life success.
- Discover helpful Internet sites.

