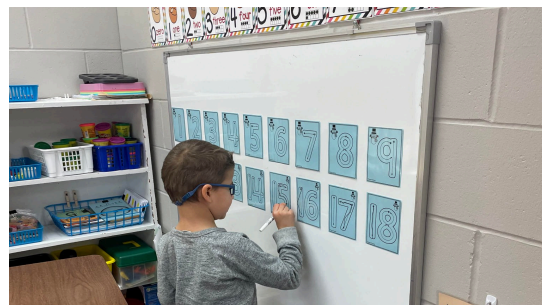


PRE-K

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Parent Guidebook





Dear Parent

A tremendous amount of learning takes place between the ages of three and five, and throughout these years, you are your child's most important teacher. With every story you read and skill you teach, you are helping your child become a better learner.

As the parent of a preschooler, there is a great deal you can do to help your child have a successful pre-k experience. Read on to learn how you can support your child during this very important year.

Introduction:

In pre-k, your child will learn, make new friends, and become more independent. As a parent, there are a number of things you can do to help and support your child in preschool, and beyond.

This book walks you through the ways your child will learn and grow this year, as well as what your child might learn in pre-k. Finally, this book also provides simple things you can do at home to help your preschooler be successful, both in and out of the classroom.



Let's make this a great year!

Children develop at different rates.

While there are certain benchmarks most preschoolers should be able to meet, children develop at different rates, and there is a huge range of what "normal" looks like at this age. Schools recognize that children entering pre-k have different skill levels, and teachers are prepared to work with children who have a wide variety of skills and abilities.

Growing Up: Pre-K

Physical Development

As the year goes on, look for your child to improve his/her **fine motor skills** – skills needed to write, draw, color, and cut. Your child's **large motor skills** will also improve – skills needed for playing games, sports, and other physical activities.

To help your child improve his/her fine motor skills, put together puzzles, do art projects, and encourage your child to button and zip his/her own clothes. To help develop your child's large motor skills, do fun physical activities together, such as dancing, riding bikes, or playing catch.



Intellectual Development

Preschoolers learn by playing and exploring. At this age, attention spans are limited, which means that preschoolers often get bored and start to goof off if the same activity goes on too long. This is normal. Games that encourage learning and thinking (e.g. puzzles, simple board games, etc.) are the best ways to promote intellectual development.

Social Development

Because there are so many new people to meet and new rules to follow, pre-k is a time of huge leaps in social development. Preschoolers often show increased affection for friends, and they are generally more willing to share and take turns. They are also getting better at understanding and empathizing with how others may be feeling.

Pre-K Learning

Learning in pre-k varies depending on the school and/or teacher. There are, however, certain skills that all preschoolers work on.

Reading

In pre-k, children learn about letters, expand their vocabulary, and learn how to properly pronounce words. The following are just some of the things preschoolers do to help build their reading readiness skills.

- Recite nursery rhymes
- Match letters and sounds
- Learn how books are read (left to right, top to bottom)
- Listen to and discuss books and stories
- Learn poems and sing songs

Writing

In preschool, students work on strengthening their hand muscles and learn how to properly hold a pencil. Here are some things preschoolers do to build their writing skills.

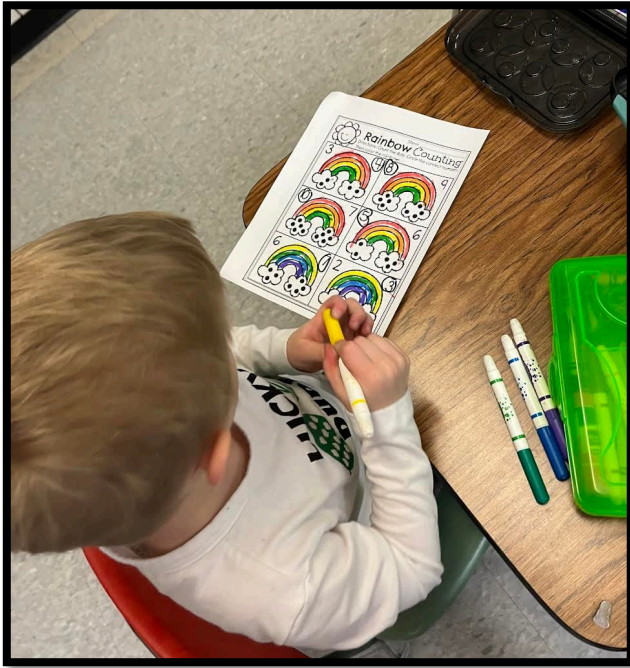
- Coloring and drawing
- Playing with clay or play dough
- Art projects that require cutting and gluing
- Tracing letters, numbers, and shapes
- Learning the difference between upper and lowercase letters
- Learning to write their name

How You Can Help

Parents play a big role in building their child's literacy. Here's how you can help.

- **Read to your child every day.** During and after reading, ask questions such as "What do you think will happen next?" "What was your favorite part?" and "Did you like this book? Why or why not?"
- **Develop a reading routine.** Designate a 'reading time' or read a bedtime story to your child each night.
- **Be a good role model.** Read newspapers, books, and magazines for information and pleasure, and talk about what you've read.
- **Read an alphabet book.** Talk about each letter and the sound that letter makes.
- **Have magnetic letters on your refrigerator.** Ask your child to find specific letters for you.
- **Form letters.** Use play dough, shaving cream, or put salt on a cookie sheet to form letters. Also write letters with sidewalk chalk.
- **Use old magazines and go on a letter hunt.** Cut out words and pictures that start with a specific letter and make a collage.
- **Think of words that rhyme.** While driving in the car, ask your child to think of words that rhyme with things you see (tree-bee)





Math

In preschool, children build math readiness skills – skills that will help them do more complicated math in the years to come. Examples include:

- Counting (including understanding what “how many” means)
- Sorting items by color or shape
- Comparing objects using terms like bigger, smaller, more, and less.

How You Can Help

Look for opportunities to talk about numbers as you go about your daily activities. Here are some examples.

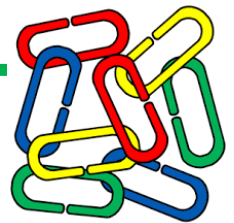
- When reading a book, count the number of objects on a page.
- As you drive around town, point out the numbers you see on buildings, billboards, and street signs.
- Ask your child to bring you a specific number of objects, such as two books or four crayons.
- To help your child understand descriptive terms such as more, less, bigger, smaller, taller, shorter, same, and different, look for opportunities to compare objects by size, shape, and weight, such as *“Which tree is taller?”* *“Which rock is heavier?”* or *“Which bench is longer?”*

Learn the Lingo

Manipulatives – Manipulatives include items such as beads, tiles, counters, and cubes.

Manipulatives are fun and colorful, and especially ideal for children who learn by touch or doing.

Often used to teach math concepts, manipulatives also help young learners develop their fine motor skills.



Science

In pre-k, students learn basic science concepts through observation, experimentation, and play. Here are some examples of science activities pre-k students may go to help them better understand the world in which they live.

- Identify living and non-living things
- Learn how plants grow
- Talk about different weather patterns
- Experiment with magnets
- Predict which objects float and which sink in water
- Learn about their five senses
- Group items such as leaves or seeds
- Measure items with rulers, yardsticks, and tape measures



How You Can Help

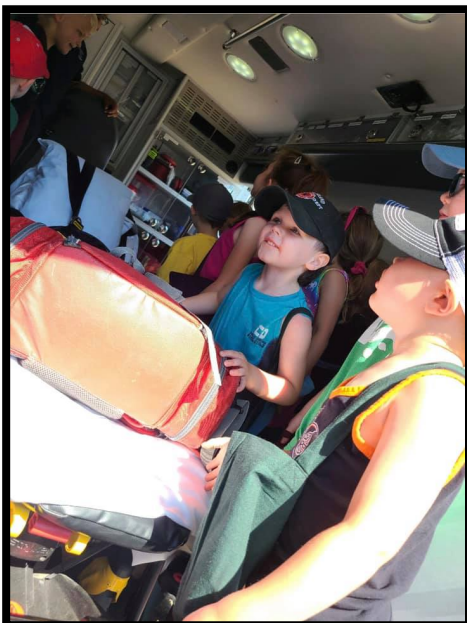
Incorporate basic science concepts into everyday life and play. Here are some ideas.

- Go for walks and observe the clouds in the sky. Talk about how some clouds look different than others.
- Help your child collect leaves, and have him/her draw pictures of different shapes and colors of the leaves you find.
- While your child is taking a bath, ask him/her to predict whether certain bath toys will sink or float.
- Go online to find fun, easy science experiments to do with your child.

Social Studies

In pre-k, students learn simple facts about people, history, and government. They also talk about how people in communities live, work, and travel. Here are a few things your preschooler might do and learn.

- Students often learn about how communities function, and what various community members do (e.g. firefighters, EMT's, police, doctors, nurses, grocery store workers, barbers).
- Students may talk about families, such as who is included in their family, and how they are related to each other (e.g., my aunt is my mom's sister).
- Students may discuss holidays, such as Thanksgiving, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Independence Day.



How You Can Help

- Point out, and perhaps visit, important places in your community (e.g. the police station, fire station, hospital, public library).
- Talk to your child about neighborhoods, cities, states, countries, and continents, starting with the area in which you live. Look at pictures of other states and countries and talk about the places you and your child might like to visit when he/she gets older.
- Read books about different countries and cultures.

Help Your Child Succeed

Now is the time to help your child develop habits that will promote success in pre-k, and beyond. Here's what you can do.

Promote independence

It might be easier and quicker for you to put your child's jacket on, but taking a few extra minutes to teach self-help skills will encourage independence and build self-confidence.

Take some time to help your child learn how to do the following:

- Use the restroom
- Wash his/her hands
- Use eating utensils
- Drink from a cup or juice box
- Put on a coat and hat
- Button, snap, and zip
- Cover his/her mouth when sneezing or coughing
- Take shoes off and put them back on



Encourage problem solving

When something is difficult, don't immediately swoop in to help. Instead, let your child try to problem solve – and celebrate when he/she is successful!

Build communication skills

Encourage your child to verbally express his/her needs clearly. For example, if he/she wants a drink or a particular toy, make sure your child asks for it in language everyone can understand.

Help your child "use his/her words" to express feelings as well. If your child ever needs help or is upset, it's important that he/she be able to communicate feelings, needs, and preferences with teachers and peers.

Develop routines

Routines for sleep, meals, homework, chores, and play can provide stability for young learners. What might seem like a simple routine to you may be a source of comfort and accomplishment for your child. Having routines at home may also help your child get better at following routines at school.

Establish morning and nighttime routines and make sure your child gets to bed early enough to get 10-11 hours of sleep.

Make picking out clothes for the next day part of your child's bedtime routine. It will give your child a sense of control and accomplishment – and make getting ready for school in the morning easier.

Social and Emotional Growth

For many children, pre-k is the first time they meet and are expected to get along with lots of different people. Therefore, pre-k is an important year for helping your child develop the social and emotional skills needed to make friends, express him/herself, and adapt to a variety of social situations.

Build essential skills

- Listen when others are talking
- Be interested in watching what others are doing
- Begin to take turns with peers
- Initiate interactions with others
- Begin to share toys with others
- Remember friends' names
- Greet others
- Use good manners – say *“please”* and *“thank you”*
- Begin to understand that no one always gets to do what they want to do



Encourage friendships

Spending time with other children the same age is the best way for your child to develop good social skills. Time spent with peers teaches children how to solve problems, share ideas, cooperate with others, and develop conversational skills.

- Start with short periods of time with peers
- Provide adult supervision to help keep interactions positive
- Praise your child for getting along with other children
- Plan activities that give your child the opportunity to play and interact with other children, such as playdates, library story time, and going to the park.



Use teachable moments

Look for opportunities to demonstrate how words can be used in various situations. Here are three specific examples:

If your child grabs something from another child, go to your child, gently give the toy back, and say *“If you want to see the toy, you should ask, “Can I see your toy?”* On a good day, the child will be willing to share. If not, help your child understand that the toy belongs to that child – then help your preschooler find something else to play with.

If you see someone bothering your child or taking a toy away, go to your child and model what he/she might say, *“Please stop doing that.”* Hopefully the other child will understand and stop. If not, redirect your little one to play with someone else.

Encourage your child to express him/herself. For example, if your child seems to really like another child’s shirt, you can help him/her say *“I really like your Ninja Turtle shirt.”*

Help develop confidence



Pre-k is an important year for developing confidence and self-esteem. Children who are confident and feel good about themselves perform better in school, make smarter choices, and are better able to take on new challenges.

Here are some things you can do to help your child develop a positive self-image and become more confident.

- Give your child a small job to do each day, such as setting the table. Make sure the task is completed – it’s important for children to learn to finish what they start.
- Let your child make choices. Allow him/her to choose the bedtime book, which clothes to wear, or what games to play.
- Consider your child’s interests and look for groups he/she might enjoy. Also look for social opportunities with family and friends.
- Praise your child for a job well done, and also for good effort.



Children remember positive statements, so give your child some words of praise or encouragement every day.

In Closing

This will be a year of big changes. Your child will learn a great deal, and you will play a big part in his/her successes. Be positive and supportive, show interest, and maintain a sense of humor. With your support and guidance, your child is sure to find success, not only in pre-k, but for years to come.