



10 Things You Can Do Now to Prepare Your Child for Kindergarten

Entering Kindergarten is such an exciting step in your child's life. It is a milestone for both you and your child. You will notice incredible changes in your child over the next few years. One of the greatest and most significant is that he/she will learn to read.

Studies show that every child starts school wanting to learn how to read. Children come to school with the expectation that they will learn to read, but the development of reading actually starts well before a child enters school. It begins when he/she first hears sounds, and continues to develop through a variety of experiences. These experiences act like building blocks. If a child has these experiences he/she has a strong foundation when he/she begins school. If a child does not have these experiences, his/her development will not occur as rapidly as the child who has had them. It is only after the foundation is established that the structure can be built upon it.

There are many, many things that you can do as a parent to establish a strong foundation for your child. Below are the "top ten".

1. **Talk to your child as much as you can.** Take the opportunity to converse with him/her while waiting in line at the grocery store, or waiting in the doctor's office. Have a conversation while you are driving in the car. Point out signs and stores, and discuss the things you pass in your travels. The more your child hears words the richer his/her own vocabulary will become.
2. **Read aloud to your child.** Reading aloud fosters a love of reading, enriches vocabulary, promotes creativity, unlocks imagination, raises self-esteem, models good use of language, creates a closeness between you and your child, helps your child realize that the black marks on the page carry meaning, allows you the opportunity to relate real-life to books, provides important background knowledge. This is the single most important thing that you can do. Children who are read to regularly develop as readers much earlier than those who have not been read to regularly.



"The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children"

Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading, 1985

3. **Point out environmental print** (store signs, restaurant signs, billboards, street signs, stop signs, movie marquis, etc.) **to your child**. Play games when you walk or travel. See how many "Stop" signs you can see. Have your child help you find items at the grocery store. If he/she knows what the Cheerios box looks like have he/she help you find it. This print has meaning to your child, and he or she will begin looking for it and reading it.
4. **Be a reading model**. Have your child see you reading the newspaper, a magazine, a cookbook, directions, a book. Your child will want to imitate what you do. Show him/her that reading is important to you.
5. **Take your child places and then talk about your visit**. Places you could take your child are: an airport, a train station, a bus station, a bank, a farm, a park, a fair, the library, a post office, a bakery, a gas station, an office, a museum. Discuss what you saw on your visit and encourage your child to ask you questions. The background knowledge a child has is very important in developing comprehension. The more experiences he/she has, the easier it is for him/her to understand information in books.
6. **Play look and search games**. Look for shapes. You decide on a shape and ask your child to see how many things he/she can find that are that shape. You can do the same thing with colors. This will help develop an awareness of concepts.
7. **Limit your child's TV watching**. When your child does watch TV, discuss what he/she is watching. This will help develop a greater understanding of the show.
8. **Keep books, magazines, newspapers, pencils, pens, and paper readily accessible to your child**. Encourage him/her to use them. This inspires creativity and discovery.
9. **Tell your child stories and encourage him to tell you stories**. This develops an understanding of story structure. He/She will acquire the understanding that stories have a beginning, middle, and an end.
10. **Encourage your child**. Celebrate the positive things that he/she does. This will encourage him/her to be successful.

