

WELCOME TO KINDERGARTEN!!!

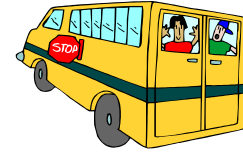
Tips to help your kindergartener adjust to kindergarten and be successful at school.



BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS...

- *Be enthusiastic about the upcoming change. Let your child know that school is a great place to learn and make friends.
- *Make a countdown calendar. Start one to two weeks prior to school, mark down the days until school starts.
- *Help your child pick out a special lunch box, backpack and first day outfit.
- *Take your child by the school during the summer months to show him/her where he/she will be going.
- *Begin to help your child follow a schedule such as consistent waking time, eating a nutritious breakfast, washing and dressing, and going to bed. This will be a tremendous help when they actually go to school.
- *Make a special "kindergarten folder" and message board at home to keep track of important notes from school.

- *Shop for practical, wash-and-wear clothing that your child can manage by himself or herself.
- *Make sure transportation and before- and after-school plans are clear to your child.
- *Provide playmates where your child can practice sharing and playing with other children.
- *Visit the school and meet the teacher prior to the first day.
- *Read books such as *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn, *The Berenstain Bears Go To School* by Stan and Jan Berenstain, *A Child Goes to School: A Storybook for Parents and Children Together*, by Sara Steinn and *The Night Before Kindergarten*, by Natasha Wing. They will help you prepare your child and develop a good-bye routine to ease morning transitions.
- *Familiarize the child. Explain what to expect and answer honestly all questions.
- *Be supportive. Show understanding and empathy for your child's concerns.
- *Encourage autonomy. Apart from teaching self-help skills, another way to promote autonomy is to gradually increase the length of time your child is able to separate from you.



THE DAY BEFORE KINDERGARTEN

- *Make sure your child eats well and gets plenty of rest the night before.
- *Review plans for transportation and before-and after-school care. Let them know exactly when they will see you on school days.
- *Gauge your show of enthusiasm. Some children only need calm assurance and a low-key introduction to keep first day jitters at bay.
- *Decide how you will say good-bye and practice this. It is important that this be a positive experience so that your child can leave you feeling as good as possible. You are setting the stage for the rest of the day so it helps so much if the good-bye is done in a consistent and loving manner.
- *Many kindergartners find it very helpful to bring a stuffed animal from home to hold or keep in the backpack. They will often do this for a while until they feel secure enough to leave it at home. It is fine to offer this to your child, particularly if he or she seems unsure or having a hard time with leaving you.



THE FIRST DAY

- *Try to keep mornings calm. Allow plenty of time for morning routines.
- *Pack a note in your child's lunchbox to say hello, "I Love You" or pack a picture of the family.
- *Tell your child all the good things that are going to happen today: go to his/her kindergarten classroom, see the teacher, make new friends, learn and play.
- *Take a picture of your little one all ready for kindergarten.
- *Begin your good-bye routine. Remind him/her to have a good day and tell him/her when you will see each other again. Do not prolong the good-bye. Be firm and encouraging if you need to, saying things like, "You will be o.k." "I will see you later." "I know you can do this."
- **Expect success. Be confident your child can handle the situation, so your child can draw on your strength and calmness. If your child cries when you drop him/her off, try not to overreact.
- *Set aside extra time later in the day to hear about what happened on his/her first day.

THE REST OF THE DAYS

- *Keep those routines consistent! Children this age need consistency in their morning and evening routines to provide the basis for them to be ready and able to learn. Adequate rest, nutrition and daily routines are great gifts you can give your child!
- *Provide time daily to discuss the events of the day. Children may need prompting in order to remember what happened: "Tell me what you did in Center Time." Or "Tell me what you did during Rug Time." "Did you learn any new songs or games today?" "Who did you play with today?" "What did you do on the bus ride?" "What happened at Y-Care?"
- *Volunteer in the classroom. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to experience your child's world.
- *Praise your child for any accomplishment during a school day and focus on the positives, not the negatives. As a general rule, try to support your child but don't try to protect him from a world in which he must live. You child must learn to solve his own conflicts with teachers and classmates.



A NOTE ABOUT SEPERATION ANXIETY

- *It is normal for children to be a little unsure of what kindergarten will be like. If your child appears unduly worried, is having trouble sleeping, eating, crying, or difficulty with leaving you, contact his/her teacher or school counselor. Together, we can work out a plan to ease the anxiety and smooth out the transition.

RESOURCES

- *National Association for the Education of Young Children. For a free copy of NAEYC'S brochure, *So Many Good-Byes*, send a SASE to NAEYC, 1509 16th St., N.W. Washington, DC 20036-1426. Specify box #573.
- *Continuity for Young Children: Positive Transitions to Elementary School, 1997 California Dept. of Education. Order from CDE Press 1-800-995-4099.
- *Bradley, Gwen. *Ways to Help Your Child Succeed in Kindergarten*. PTA Today 9 (1984) 11 - 12.
*Offered by
Margaret Bodine and Joan Ayers,
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