



School Readiness



Ready for school – how can you tell?

‘School readiness’ in children includes many different skills and behaviours, such as:

Social skills

Being able to get along with other children, demonstrate basic manners, assert themselves, and being able to play independently as well as with other children.

Emotional maturity

Being able to manage their emotions, cope with minimal adult contact in large groups, focus on tasks, follow directions and instructions from teachers, cope with the stress of the new school environment, and understand the rules.

Language skills

Being able to talk and listen to adults and other children, speak clearly, communicate needs, understand stories, and begin to identify some letters and sounds.

Cognitive Skills

Basic number sense, basic thinking skills, being able to wait and take turns.

Physical health and coordination

Basic health, fine motor skills (such as being able to grip a pencil and turn pages in a book) and physical coordination (being able to run, jump, climb, and play ball).

Independence

Basic skills to manage their needs without adult supervision, such as going to the toilet, dressing, unwrapping their lunch and managing their belongings.

If you are not sure whether your child is ready to start school, talk to your child’s preschool/ kindergarten teacher or early childhood educator – they will be able to help you with assessing your child’s development and readiness for school.

How can you prepare your child for school

- Talking with your child about school and what it will be like
- Visiting the school and reflecting on what it was like
- Reading books about starting school
- Listening to children's expectations about school
- Encouraging your child's natural curiosity
- Making everyday things an exploration of language

While there has been a rise in popularity for commercial ‘school readiness’ programs for preschoolers – these are not usually necessary, and little kids learn best through play! Here are some easy things you can do to help your child get ready for starting school:

- Try to arrange play dates with other children starting at the same school. This gives your child the chance to develop their social skills – and will give them the confidence that they will have a friend to talk to when they start school.
- Let your child practise drawing with a range of different materials, such as pencils, crayons and textas, to help develop their fine motor skills – and remember to praise their efforts!
- Encourage your child to dress and undress themselves, and use the toilet independently.
- Encourage your child to have conversations with you – ask them questions, listen to their answers, and encourage them to talk about what they think and feel so they can express themselves with new friends and teachers.
- Read with your child as often as possible. If your child has some reading skills already, that’s great! But if not, don’t worry – they will be taught how to read at school. Just enjoying books with you develops early literacy skills and helps encourage a love of reading. When reading with your child, talk to them about the story, point out new words, and ask questions – this will help with their comprehension, vocabulary and language skills.
- Help your child develop a basic awareness of numbers by helping out around the house – they could set the table and count the plates, match socks from the washing line, or measure the ingredients for some baking.
- Play games with your child – simple board games (like snakes and ladders) and card games (like snap and go fish) are great for practising turn-taking, sharing, waiting and learning to cope with not winning!

Remember, every child develops at their own pace and has their own strengths, interests, temperament and approach to learning – so don’t worry if your child doesn’t demonstrate all of the ‘school readiness’ skills and behaviours described above. If you feel at all concerned with your little one’s development, talk to their teacher/early childhood educator or your GP – they will be able to provide assessment and advice.

