

Getting Ready for Kindergarten: Ways to Help Your Child

Young children will feel more successful during the first days of school if they have mastered a few basic skills before walking through that schoolhouse door. Children who arrive in kindergarten *able to cut with scissors, hold pencils or crayons correctly, flip pages of a book, recite simple nursery rhymes and the alphabet, and even use paste* (a little bit at a time!), will experience less anxiety and be better equipped to begin the school experience. In addition to those mentioned above, there are many simple things you can do during the summer months to prepare your child for this first big step—school.

The San Diego Council for Literacy Professionals' "Kinder Kits" bookmarks stress the following eight ideas:

1. **READ** aloud a bedtime story whenever possible. Make it a part of your nightly routine.
2. **TALK** about school. Take time each day to talk to your child. Conversations help build vocabulary and will lessen the anxiety related to school.
3. **LISTEN** carefully when your child talks and respond with words to show you understand what your child tells you.
4. **SING** the alphabet song often so your child will know it by heart. Sing nursery rhymes and songs.
5. **READ!** Get a library card from the public library. Encourage your child to choose her own books to "read." *Pretend reading* is an expected first step to learning "real reading." Teach her how to turn the pages and to care for books.
6. **WRITE!** Encourage your child to write, draw, and paint with pencils, crayons, pens, markers, and paint brushes. Show your child how to read and write his name.
7. **TEACH** your child the names of letters and numbers. Practice counting together. Help your child know the names of letters in her name.
8. **LOOK** for environmental print your child can read. Look at signs while driving. Read grocery labels. Point out to your child letters and words everywhere you go! You will be amazed at how your child can develop an extensive vocabulary in a short time.

Beginning in kindergarten and until your child graduates, homework will become a regular component of the learning process. One of the most common concerns parents have is how to get their children to do their homework. If you establish a family routine for homework early on, your child will learn good study habits and complete homework on a regular basis. A successful homework routine includes a *special time, a special place, and special tools* for completing homework. Establishing homework as a regular habit is one of the most important ways parents can help children do better in school.