

Ready! Set! Go!

Supporting Your Child's Learning in Kindergarten

READY...

Families play a central role in a child's educational experience and learning and can significantly increase their child's success at school. When family members actively engage in at-home learning experiences, everyone benefits. Families have a deep understanding of their child's abilities, needs, and strengths. Building partnerships with teachers and school staff are an important aspect of being part of a school community. Teachers can help answer questions and guide families to different types of support that a school has in place to help meet the needs of any learner. This guide was developed to provide families support as their child progresses through kindergarten.

This guide provides practical strategies to support children's development of:

- motor skills
- social and emotional learning skills
- academic skills

Each section provides an explanation of what the specific skill is, tips for talking to the teacher, examples of what your child should know and be able to do, and ideas for supporting learning at home.

SET...

If your child will be five years of age before September 2, they are able to attend kindergarten. Many schools begin the kindergarten enrollment process in March, so be sure to contact your neighborhood district or charter school for information. Children are not automatically enrolled in kindergarten. Families must contact the neighborhood school to start the enrollment process. Things to consider:

- A kindergarten student may only enroll in one kindergarten class.
- To register your child, the district/charter may ask you to provide:
 - An official birth certificate
 - An immunization record or exemption form
 - Proof of your current address (utility bill, driver's license, etc.)
- If requested, education translation services are available at schools. They are designed to ensure that families are informed and understand their child's academic progress and needs.

GO!



Motor Skills



Motor, or physical, skills are important to a child's early development. Motor skills include both gross (large) and fine motor abilities. The development of motor skills helps to increase strength and confidence.

EXPLANATION

Gross motor skills involve development of large muscles—legs, arms, neck, torso—to move around. Fine motor skills involve using small muscles to accomplish activities such as getting dressed, using utensils to eat, and tying shoes. Making sure that your child has regular opportunities to participate in active play is important to the development of both gross and fine motor skills, as well as their overall health and well-being. Remember that every child is different. No two children will grow and develop at the same rate. If young children are not able to complete everyday tasks, it can impact their independence and their ability to develop self-care skills.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO THE TEACHER

- **Engage in conversation**—ask about your child's motor skill development and if the teacher has noticed things that he/she does well or may be struggling with.
- **Work collaboratively**—reinforce activities at home that your child is working on at school for both fine and gross motor skills. If you need suggested activities on how to do this, ask the teacher.
- **Tap into support**—talk with the teacher and school staff if you have concerns about your child's motor skills. There are resources available to support your child in all areas of development.

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

Some Examples of What Your Child Should Be Able to Do

Gross motor skills help with everyday functions, such as walking, running, and playing. Children need daily opportunities to practice and perfect gross motor skills in order to learn how to control and coordinate their bodies. Practicing and perfecting gross motor skills increases confidence. When children feel comfortable and confident in their ability to move their bodies, they are more likely to engage in active play, which promotes healthy choices and social interactions. Development of these skills also impacts academic learning and classroom engagement. When students can sit at a table or on a rug for extended periods of time (such as listening to a story being read aloud), they are able to attend to classroom activities, as well as engage in fine motor activities with less difficulty.

Here are examples of what your child should be able to do:

- Stand/hop on one foot
- Kick a ball at a target
- Catch a bounced ball with hands
- Jump over an object and land with both feet together



(Gross Motor Skills continued)

Things You Can Do— Everyday Activities to Support Learning

- Have your child hop, jump, walk, and run
- Walk in a straight line forward and backwards
- Crawl under, climb over, and stand on top of an object
- Bounce, catch, kick, and throw balls
- Play with balloons and bubbles
- Dance to music
- Actively play at the park
- Ride a bike or scooter
- Build an obstacle course
- Play *Simon Says* and have your child copy your movements



FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Some Examples of What Your Child Should Be Able to Do

Fine motor skills allow children to make small movements of the hands, wrists, fingers, feet, and toes. These skills are more complex than gross motor skills and require children to use smaller movements in a coordinated way, such as using pencils, pens, or scissors to support their activities. This also requires that children have patience and persistence. By giving your child many opportunities to work on fine motor skills, you engage them in repeated effort. This not only improves fine motor skills but also teaches your child how to handle frustration.

Here are examples of what your child should be able to do:

- Cut out simple shapes
- Write name
- Draw basic pictures
- Trace lines with their fingers
- Hold a pencil or pen properly
- Color within lines
- Dress and undress independently
- Tie shoes
- Speak understandably
- Turn a page

Things You Can Do— Everyday Activities to Support Learning

- Blow bubbles
- Play with squirt toys
- Lace items, such as shoes
- Build with blocks and Legos
- Brush teeth
- Play with playdough
- Use scissors to cut
- String beads
- Help with meal preparation
- Draw, color, and paint—use crayons, chalk, finger paints, paint brushes, or sponges



Social & Emotional Skills

Kindergarten may be a child's first opportunity to interact with several peers and new adults without their parents' supervision. Learning to establish positive relationships, manage and express emotions, and recognize how others are feeling are important skills that lead to positive learning experiences.

EXPLANATION

Social and emotional learning includes skills and knowledge that children need in order to interact with one another, their teacher, and others in their lives. This knowledge and skill set helps children to make and keep positive relationships with others, creates a positive learning environment, establishes mutual respect, and helps in their learning of math, reading, and other academic skills. Social and emotional skills are incredibly important for a child to develop. When students master these skills, opportunities for success increase in school and life.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO THE TEACHER

- **Seek support**—ask your child's teacher for activities you can do at home to support what they are learning at school. This provides you with a chance to get extra support.
- **Establish open and honest communication**—make teachers aware of what you notice about your child's social and emotional development. Share about your child's strengths and needs—it is important for teachers to hear this from you. Open communication can help to ensure that the kindergarten experience is a positive experience for your child.
- **Participate in school events**—volunteer in the classroom or attend activities and workshops. This provides you with an opportunity to talk to your child's teacher and develop relationships with others at the school.
- **Take advantage of opportunities**—contribute to school events and programs. Share your learned skills (for example, speaking a different language, being an accountant, or folding origami). Share your knowledge (for example, history of a neighborhood or expertise about insects). Share your cultural background (for example, cultural traditions, habits, or artifacts). This helps build a sense of connectedness and offers learning to the larger school community.



KEY SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Some Examples of What Your Child Should Be Able to Do

Children perform better academically when social and emotional learning is combined with academics. Families and schools should work together with a focus on five key social and emotional skills.

Here are examples of what your child should be able to do:

- **Build self-awareness**—should recognize feelings and manage anger.
- **Understand others**—should develop empathy and take the perspective of others.
- **Understand himself/herself**—should handle emotions, set goals, and deal with obstacles.
- **Make responsible decisions and follow through**—should consider long-term consequences of his/her actions for themselves and others.
- **Build healthy relationships**—should say no to negative peer pressure and work to resolve conflicts constructively.

Source: <https://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/schools-families-and-social-and-emotional-learning.pdf>



Things You Can Do—Everyday Activities to Support Learning

- **Develop emotional awareness**—teach your child different emotions and how to appropriately express those emotions. Talk with your child about their emotions and model your own emotional awareness, such as naming emotions and how you express and manage emotions. Give your child strategies for what they can do to be in charge of their emotions.
- **Give responsibilities**—assign simple tasks to help build your child's sense of self-worth.
- **Practice problem-solving skills**—allow your child to work through problems on their own before jumping in to help.
- **Encourage positive self-talk**—model for your child how to think positively.
- **Practice mindfulness**—teach your child how to focus, calm down, and relax.
- **Encourage kindness**—complete random acts of kindness with your child to allow them to see how their actions may affect others.
- **Check-in daily**—ask your child how they are feeling and provide opportunities to talk about how to manage emotions.
- **Discuss empathy**—describe empathy as the ability to consider how others think and feel and allows one to respond appropriately. Empathy is developed in young children through trusted relationships and structured settings.
- **Develop cultural awareness**—talk to your child about their cultural background(s) and cultural practices. Encourage them to actively learn, share, and connect with others from different cultural backgrounds to help build shared understanding, respect, and appreciation of various cultures.
- **Get curious**—praise your child's curiosity. Ask them questions, share your thoughts and ideas, and engage in conversations the best you can. Encourage them to find answers on their own. Teach them to use curiosity as a way of learning in the classroom and connecting with others.

Academic Skills

There are many skills and concepts that students learn in kindergarten. Much time is spent working on developing foundational math and literacy skills. To be successful in later school years, children must leave kindergarten with a strong foundation in literacy and math.

EXPLANATION

Children grow, develop, and learn at different rates so your child may already be successful with some academic skills and may require more time to develop others. Children need many opportunities to learn and practice academic skills both in the classroom and at home. You can help your child to be successful by developing a positive relationship with their teacher at the beginning of the year and supporting in-class learning with at-home activities. This will help your child to see why academic learning is important, and how it is used outside of school.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO THE TEACHER

- **Establish open communication**—ask your child’s teacher for activities you can do at home to support what they are learning at school.
- **Focus on communication**—keep conversations focused on the most important topics. You can plan for conversations ahead of time with notes. If you have areas of concern, be honest and open about them with your child’s teacher. If you would like support in talking with the teacher, ask for a parent advocate or another school staff member to join you.
- **Be a volunteer**—if your schedule permits, volunteer to help with classroom parties, field trips, or on a regular basis as a classroom helper. Volunteering is another way to help you get some insight in how your child fits in both academically and socially.
- **Tap into support**—if a need arises, identify advocates and allies at the school site and/or district to support your needs.
- **Get connected**—meet other parents, staff members, and contribute to the school community by joining parent groups and participating in out of school activities.



MATHEMATICS

Some Examples of What Your Child Should Know and Be Able to Do

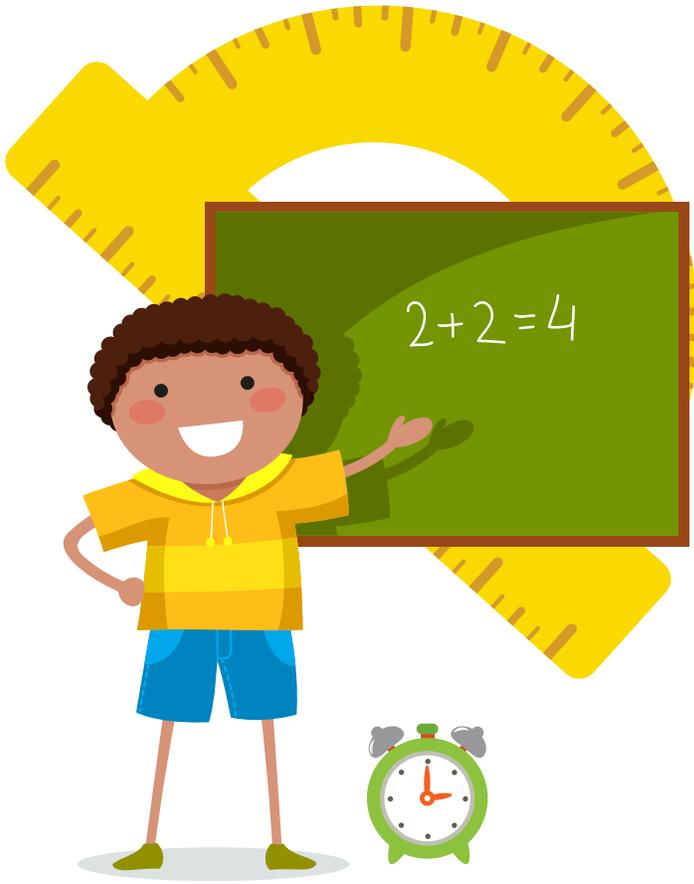
In kindergarten, your child will learn many foundational skills in math. Some of these concepts include numbers and what they represent, adding and subtracting small numbers, comparing quantities, understanding shapes, and developing problem solving skills.

Here are examples of what your child should be able to do by the end of kindergarten:

- Count to 100 by ones and tens
- Read and write numbers 0 to 20
- Count objects to tell how many
- Compare numbers and sets of objects
- Correctly name shapes
- Identify flat shapes from solid shapes
- Use simple shapes to form larger shapes
- Compare objects to see which is shorter, longer, taller, bigger, etc.
- Understand that teen numbers are made up of a group of ten and then some more.
- Add and subtract within 10

Things You Can Do— Everyday Activities to Support Learning

- Ask your child questions that require counting. Have them count objects aloud (such as how many items in their snack, how many steps it takes to get from one place to another, how many children they see on the playground).
- Ask your child to compare two different sets of objects.
- Have your child practice counting in patterns, such as by 10s and 5s.
- Read simple story problems aloud for your child to solve using both addition and subtraction.
- Have your child measure different things using everyday objects as measuring tools (for example, paper clips, blocks, coins, etc.).
- Have your child identify different shapes they see when out with the family (for example, at the store or on a walk).
- Create shapes using things such as sticks, marshmallows, pipe cleaners, etc.



LITERACY

Some Examples of What Your Child Should Know and Be Able to Do

In kindergarten, your child will learn about the basic features of print and gain an understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds. They will begin matching letters and sounds to sound out simple words, which is the beginning stage of reading. Your child will also learn to write and share information in a variety of ways. These include drawing, writing words and sentences, listening to others, and speaking aloud.

Here are examples of what your child should be able to do by the end of kindergarten:

- Recognize and produce rhyming words
- Name all upper and lowercase letters and their sounds
- Isolate and pronounce beginning, middle, and ending sounds of a three-letter word
- Add or substitute sounds in one syllable words
- Read common high-frequency words (words that occur often in print)
- Ask and answer questions
- Read appropriate text
- Write a complete sentence



Things You Can Do— Everyday Activities to Support Learning

- Read with your child every day. Ask questions and talk about what you are reading, for example:
 - What do you think will happen next?
 - Who is this story about?
- Ask your child specific questions about their school day, such as:
 - Who did you play with today?
 - What did you do during recess?
 - What songs did you listen to or sing?
 - What letters and numbers are you learning?
- Ask your child if they brought anything home to share with you. This helps keep you informed about what your child is working on and if they need extra support in certain areas.
- Play word games like *I Spy* to help your child develop their language skills.
- Give your child a word and have them tell you a word that rhymes.
- Give your child a sound and have them find the letter that makes that sound on a sign while you are out and about.
- Tell stories and have your child tell stories. These stories can be make-believe or retelling previous events.
- Model the enjoyment of reading by reading yourself and having kids see you reading. This is a great way to show that reading can be entertaining.
- Give your child a three-letter word and have them change the beginning, middle, or ending sound to create a new word. (For example, you say, “If my word is hot, and I change the beginning sound to /p/, what is my new word? Your child says “pot.”)
- Visit your local library. This is a great resource for supporting literacy outside of school time. Informational—also known as non-fiction—books are particularly interesting to students at this age. The library has a wealth of informational books on all sorts of topics.
- Encourage strong native language skills in the home as this will help students learn English.

THIS IS A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT
of the



Utah State Board of Education

250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200
www.schools.utah.gov

Sydnee Dickson, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

and the

**Region 15 Comprehensive Center
at WestEd**

<https://www.wested.org/project/region-15-comprehensive-center/>

For further information, please contact:

CHRISTINE ELEGANTE

K-3 Literacy Education Specialist

Christine.Elegante@schools.utah.gov

or phone: 801.538.7782

All illustrations are copyrighted to [iStock photo](#) and may not be extracted, copied, shared, or used outside of this document.