



How to Help Prepare Your Child For School



When your child starts school, there will always be a member of the teaching staff to help them. Whether that be helping them with their learning, putting on their coat or taking turns with others. However, it is really helpful if your child can already do some things for themselves. Developing independence gives children a sense of self belief and often encourages them to want to be more independent with lots of other things too.

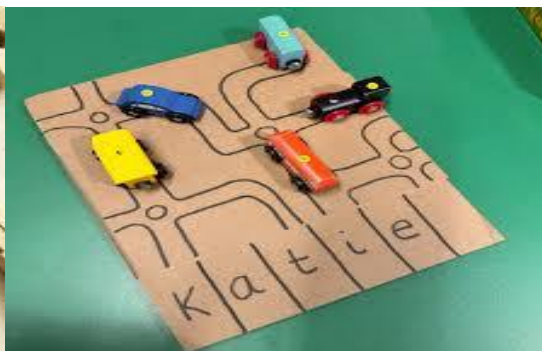
Research has shown that preparing children for school in a positive manner has an impact, not only on their happiness through their time in their new setting but also on how they view transitions in later life.

Name Recognition

It is helpful if your child can recognise their name, it enables them to find their place in the cloakroom and keep track of labelled clothes and other belongings.

Below are some ideas and activities that can help you support your child to recognise their name:

- Always show their name with a capital letter at the beginning followed by lower case letters.
- Print the letters of their name into sand or dough.
- Write the letters of your child's name on Lego/ Duplo blocks and then build their name.
- Write each letter on a toy car and line them up in order.
- Use letter beads to thread a necklace or bracelet.
- Make the letters of their name with salt dough and decorate them.
- Make the letters of their name with natural objects such as pine cones, sticks and flowers.
- Write the letters on pegs and match.



Numbers

Real life often provides the best opportunities to develop early maths skills like counting and recognising numbers. The following ideas will help your child to explore numbers, giving them a great start to developing early maths skills and concepts:

- Sing counting songs and rhymes, such as '10 Green Bottles', '1, 2, Buckle My Shoe' and '1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Once I Caught a Fish Alive'. Singing songs is a good way for children to become familiar with counting. Don't worry if they choose the same songs again and again!
- Numbers are all around us, from calendars to the remote control, the telephone to car registration plates. Try pointing out numbers when you're out and about – on front doors, signs, the front of buses and train platforms.
- Talking about numbers around you early and often will show your child that numbers are part of everyday life. Choose a 'Number of the Week' and see how many times you can spot this number, around the house, out in the street or in the supermarket.
- Count whenever you can – count together, as well as letting your child see and hear you counting. Practise chanting numbers and, as your child's confidence grows, start from different numbers – 5, 6, 7, etc.
- Count real objects – your child's toy cars, pencils, shoes, or the number of stairs in your house. Don't worry if your child remembers the answer – they can count to check!
- Share a book with your child. There are many fantastic books based around numbers, but any book can be used to help children develop early counting and number recognition skills. Take time to talk about what your child can see on each page. Count objects on the page, and compare the number of objects from page to page. Look at the page numbers and say them together.
- Baking is a great way to introduce weighing, measuring and time.
- Compare the size and shape of natural objects that they find.
- Experiment with volume and capacity at bath time- 'full/ empty' etc

Social Skills

Learning in a classroom is a social activity. Children learn and develop by playing alongside their peers, and they will make better progress if they are happy mixing with other children and adults you can encourage this by:

- Practising greetings, your child should know how to start a conversation with their new classmates. You can use dolls and soft toys to practise saying 'hello'.
- Practising talking through role play, puppets and storytelling. Talk to your child through the day. You can also narrate what you're doing, to help develop their language.
- Letting your child see you using good manners, like please and thank you. This will encourage them to act this way with their peers.
- Practising conversations- giving your child time to talk and also having times when they have to listen teaches vital speaking and listening skills. You could take turns to talk about the best part of your day whilst you are eating dinner. Can they ask questions to find out more? Can they remember their siblings favourite part of the day?
- Encouraging sharing and tolerance- playing games allows children practise social skills and turn taking. Use the language of turn taking, such as 'whose turn is it next?' and 'thank you for waiting'.
- Arrange some play dates with your child's new friends to put this into practise.



Fine Motor Skills

Building hand strength, fine motor skills, and hand eye coordination helps prepare your child for writing. Any activity that involves the hands can help develop fine motor skills. Here are some ideas and activities that you could try at home to support your child:

- Making models with construction kits such as Lego, Duplo or K'nex.
- Using scissors to cut a variety of materials set as paper, leaves, long grass, bread etc. Ensure your child has the correct scissors if they are left handed.
- Threading activities such as beads, pasta or leaves.
- Playing with playdough, rolling pins, shape cutters and other tools.
- Using wind up toys in the bath.
- Using tweezers, kitchen tongs and pegs.
- Painting, colouring, drawing, chalking, and playing with sticker books.
- Jump modelling with old boxes and tubes.
- Completing jigsaw puzzles.
- Handling objects and tools when baking, kneading and rolling dough.



Independence

The most useful thing you can do to get your child ready for school is to make sure they are comfortable doing simple tasks by themselves, these include:

- Going to the toilet. Encourage your child to use the toilet independently, wipe themselves and wash and dry their hands thoroughly afterwards.
- Getting dressed. Encourage your child to dress themselves each morning, don't worry if things are back to front but praise the effort. Try to avoid clothing with fiddly buckles and buttons. It is helpful to have a practise putting on their PE kit and taking it off again.
- Putting on shoes. Please choose shoes with Velcro fasteners, do not send shoes with laces unless your child can tie them independently. Practise putting on and taking off new school shoes they can be tricky when they are new. Stickers are available to place inside children's shoes to ensure they put them on the correct foot.
- Eating. Please help your child to practise using a knife and fork and use table manners. If they are having a packed lunch they will need to know how to open their lunch box and the items inside.
- Looking after belongings. It is much easier for children to look after the belongings they bring to school if each item is clearly labelled with their name. Show the children where their name is in the item so they know where to look for it. Please regularly check that the name is still visible and has not worn or fallen off.

Books and Nursery Rhymes

Learning to read is a vital skill that your child will develop through their time in school. We do not expect your child to be able to recognise sounds or read words when they start school. However, here are some important things you can do at home to help to prepare them:

- Encourage a love of reading by reading to child every day. Discuss what is happening in the book, point out things on the page, and ask questions. Show your child how to read with expression and use different voices for the characters.
- Visit the library to get new books but re read old favourites too.
- Broaden your child's vocabulary by talking about interesting words and objects, not just relating to the books you are reading.
- Play I spy and listen for rhyming words.
- Look for letters, words and logos when you're out and about, talk about the letters in their name.
- Sing nursery rhymes and children songs, this helps build phonological awareness.

