

Getting Ready for the New Program: Tips for Parents

1. Help your child be excited about going to the new school. Talk often about how much fun it will be to go to the “big school”, about activities your child will do there. This will help your child want to make the transition.
2. Tell your child often how proud you are that he/she is growing up, how pleased you are that the child is doing so many things by himself/herself, and how well you know the child will do in the new school. This will help your child feel confident about handling the new experiences ahead.
3. Place your child in situations where he/she needs to follow directions – one step at first, then two, then three. Teach your child to rehearse directions in order to remember them.
4. Help your child learn self care skills, which are age appropriate, such as putting away toys, handwashing, independent toileting, buttoning, zipping, and shoe tying. Teach your child to recognize his/her own name and the basic colors. Busy teachers value these skills.
5. Put your child in some situations where he cannot do the expected task and must ask for help. If he/she doesn’t know how to ask for help, demonstrate polite asking and then wait for the child to imitate you before assisting.
6. Read books with your child every day. Talk together about the pictures and the story. If your child doesn’t like to sit still for long, read for a brief time each day; even if the book time is only two minutes long, make it a happy time. You will then notice how your child’s attention span increases.
7. Watch TV with your child, especially shows like “Reading Rainbow”, “Mr. Rogers”, and “Sesame Street.” Talk together about what you are seeing. If you allow your child to watch cartoons, watch with him/her. Ask your child to tell you what happened in the cartoon story. Help the child to reconstruct the sequence of events.
8. Let your child help you sort the laundry, set the table, cook, bake, put away groceries, and organize his/her books and toys. All of these are classification tasks, related to school skills.
9. Teach the child to do simple tasks at home. Most young children can learn to hang up their coats and put things away. All but the most severely handicapped children can learn to help pick up their toys. Preschoolers can keep a “school box” at home, where the child is expected to put crayons, scissors, pencil, and eraser. Let your child help you vacuum, sweep, dust, and wash sinks and the bathtub. These very practical jobs also develop physical coordination.

10. Be sure your child has lots of opportunities to run, climb, and play outside. These activities can be done in a city neighborhood, in a rural area, or at a park; they cannot usually be done inside a house! Children who have learned to control their own bodies in space are usually more confident in new situations and more capable of managing complex motor tasks, like walking in a line.
11. Any time you teach your child to do a new task, break it into little parts and teach each part (for example, putting on shoes, cleaning the bedroom, opening a milk carton). Reward with praise each part of the task the child does successfully. Very few people praise a child too much; most of us praise too little.
12. When you go places with your child, talk about what you are seeing. Point out characteristics (color, size, shape) and names of objects you view. Try to be conversational, as you would with an adult, rather than constantly quizzing your child (“oh, look at the red house,” rather than “what color is this house?” “I like the BIG pumpkin best – which one do you like?” rather than “show me the big one”).
13. When you get home from a trip to the store or church or a party, ask your child to tell another family member what you did. If the child has difficulty retelling the event, help and support so that the story can be told. This skill is called recasting. It is closely related to reading comprehension.
14. Point out letters and words and numbers in the world around your child (McDonald’s, the house numbers, names of family members on letters, the numbers of hymns in the songbook at church). This will provide a foundation for learning symbols in reading.
15. Frequently count objects, touching them as you say the numbers. This will help your child realize that numbers represent sets of things.
16. Talk often about interesting jobs your child might have when he/she grows up – not just about making lots of money at a job. Be sure your child knows that most jobs require working hard and doing well in school.
17. Teach your child to appreciate that every person is unique and special; that human differences are a wonderful part of our world and not a threat; and that all people need to help others as well as be helped BY others in order to live happily.
18. Enjoy time you spend with your child. Positive and trusting attitudes about people and the world which your child learns now will remain with him/her throughout life.