



Kindergarten Readiness: What Parents and Caregivers Can Do

Parents and caregivers can develop Kindergarten Readiness skills without turning their centers or homes into formal classrooms and without turning themselves into academic teachers. There is absolutely no evidence that formal instruction at an early age has any lasting academic advantages. The preschool center should focus on a rich variety of activities and materials that encourage young children to explore and discover rather than force feed academics. Following is a list of areas of concentration for parents and caregivers who want to help their child to be "ready" for Kindergarten.

Size Skills:

- The basic differentiation of big and small
- Related size concepts
- Matching predicated on size

Examples of activities:

- Neighborhood walks...take the child on a walk around the neighborhood looking for objects to compare by size (ie: trees)
- Size boxes...Provide a large and a small box and two of several objects (one large/one small) and have the child sort into the appropriate box.
- Block Building...using various size blocks

Color and Shapes

Examples of activities:

- Color walks...walk around and find as many things of a certain color that you can. Do one color a week.
- Color touch... ask the child to find and touch certain colored objects (ie: the blue rug)
- Clothespin sticker match... stick dots of various colors around the outside of a plastic cup. Color the clothespins to match the dots. Ask child to clip clothespins to matching color dots

- Shape recognition... ask child to locate various shaped items around the house
- Felt shapes... cut out pieces of felt in different shapes and have children name the shapes as they put them on a flannel board. [circles, squares, triangles and rectangles]

Numbers and Math Readiness:

Skills:

- Counting
- Matching
- One to one correspondence

Examples of activities:

- Counting from 1 - 10...In the bottom of an empty egg carton place varied amounts of buttons or beans and ask the child to count how many are in each cup.
- One to one correspondence... have child help set the table by placing a fork, spoon, napkin, cup and plate on every placemat.
- Math cooking...simple recipes involving simple measurements help child to practice counting
- Flannel board matching...using felt cut outs (any kind), place a certain number of the same object across the board and then ask the child to place one of another kind under each of the objects you have laid out.
- Matched cards...make a set of numbered cards and a set of object cards and then ask child to match each numbered card with the object card that is that same amount.

Reading Readiness

Reading readiness or emergent literacy describes the early stages in a child's development toward literacy, that is, precedes the conventional reading of print.

Skills:

- Basic vocabulary
- Verbal expression

- Awareness of letters
- Sentence sense
- Story comprehension and storytelling

Examples of activities:

Simon Says and the Hokey Pokey

- Storytelling...find pictures in magazines and books and encourage child to tell you what is happening
- Writing centers...stock with pens, pencils, markers, paper (variety) and any other writing materials available.
- Foot path...to emphasize skills for reading left to right, cut out foot patterns and stick on floor in a natural walking pattern- Yellow for the left foot and blue for the right. Make a game of it and tell the child he/she must always step on the yellow one first, then blue, then yellow, then blue...
- Greeting cards...help children to make cards for special occasions.
- Magnetic or wooden alphabet letters...child can use to spell out words that you write on a piece of paper for him/her. Keep the words short, simple and familiar - one to a page or card. This also helps with one to one correspondence.
- Regular visits to the library and library storytimes
- Reading games...ask child to help you find certain letters in the soup, or on the cereal box or on billboards on the highway.
- Make up riddles...ie: "I rhyme with cool. You can swim in me. What am I?"

Position and Direction

Skills:

- Word meaning
- Relative positions
- Left to right progression
- Top/ middle/ bottom progression
- Descriptive language, including opposites

Examples of activities:

- Simon Says...include top and bottom, over and under, up and down, back and forward...
- Understanding descriptive words...have child cut out and sort magazine pictures of animals according to fast and slow - use other objects for other descriptions ie: soft/hard; happy/sad; big/little, etc.

- Marking time... using a calendar with large squares, have the child draw a picture or make a mark in the day's box as you count each day
- Directions...Give simple directions that involve a several simple movements. ie: "Walk into the kitchen. Turn around and come back. Stop and face the wall with the clock on it." Limit directions to 2 or three steps or the child will not remember it all.

Time

Examples of activities:

- Books, magazines and pictures... ask child to tell you what time of day they think it is (night or day) by looking for clues in the pictures
- Matching seasonal items...look for pictures of seasonal items (mittens, coats, bathing suits, snowshovels, etc. and ask child to match them to a set of cards you have made which clearly illustrate the seasons ie: a beach scene, a snow covered landscape, autumn trees with falling leaves, spring flowers and kite flying...
- Creating a birthday calendar...Family birthdays can be indicated on a large calendar and a card made when the birthday occurs.

Listening and Sequencing

Teachers rank understanding of the spoken word as the number one skill area in which parents should help their children prepare for Kindergarten. Listening is more than hearing. It involves learning basic sounds, words, phrases, sentences and the relationship between objects and their use.

Skills:

- Sound recognition
- Story recall
- Paying attention

Examples of Activities:

- Listening walks...listen for and identify with child both loud and soft sounds heard on the walk. Ask child to try and recall as many as possible when you return home.
- Retelling simple stories in sequence...Read a familiar story to the child and ask her/him what happened first? next? next?...and last?
- Following directions...Simon Says

- Recognizing rhyming sounds...introduce rhyming sounds through rhymes and stories such as The Cat in The Hat by Dr. Seuss

Motor Skills

- Large -muscle or gross motor activities include: jumping, hopping, climbing, throwing a ball, running, jumping rope...
- Small-muscle or fine motor activities include: coloring, cutting, drawing, buttoning, zipping

Examples of activities:

- Animal imitation...have the child imitate various animals by ie: jumping like a frog, hopping like a rabbit, galloping like a horse...
- Kicking and running...in a large, safe open area...preferably grassy for fewer scrapes and bumps
- Follow the leader...dance like a ballerina, waddle like a duck, walk a straight line like a tightrope walker...
- Riding a broomstick horse...a short broom with a decorated paper bag over the bristles can make a good fantasy horse
- Shadow tag...on sunny days outside, have the child try to step on the shadow of a playmate or yourself as you move around
- Buttoning and zipping...many items can be purchased with buttons and buttonholes, zippers and fasteners for the child to manipulate. If you are a sewer, you can create one yourself.
- Dressing up...a dress up box and a mirror are a strong attraction for any child and provide practice in putting on and taking off a variety of items.
- Cutting...use child safety scissors that really work. Children can cut up colored paper at random and make a collage with it. Give them the coupon section of Sunday's paper and let them cut out the coupons or pictures. It doesn't matter what they cut or if the cut straight or not...the idea is just to give them practice in handling the scissors.

Social - Emotional Development

Skills:

- Self-help
- Knowing one's full name and address
- The ability to work independently
- Cooperation and general social skills (very important)

Examples of activities:

- Helping with household chores...give child simple tasks to do daily and praise them for completion
- Putting on/taking off own clothes...let child do it whenever he is able. If an item is on inside out and you're not going anywhere special...it's not as important as that he/she dressed him/herself
- Cooperative games...games that include taking turns, or mutual building, puzzle making, etc.
- Leader and follower games...Farmer in the Dell, Mother, May I?, etc.

Speaking Skills

By the time a child enters Kindergarten, he/she should be able to take an active part in conversations with the teacher and classmates.

Examples of activities:

- asking questions; engaging child in conversation at mealtime...

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