

LET'S GO TO KINDERGARTEN



Prepared by
Community Action Partnership
of Sonoma County
(707) 544-6911

Contains:

- Expectations for your child for Kindergarten and Transitional Kindergarten
- Parental expectations
- Activity suggestions
- Other helpful information & resources

LET'S GO TO KINDERGARTEN

Entering kindergarten is a milestone in the life of every child. It is a time of great changes for the child and the parent. So many new things: new faces, new routines, and new challenges. It can be very exciting, but it can also be a little scary for everyone involved. Being prepared - knowing what to expect and what is expected - can turn this important transition into a successful beginning.



NOTES

**Remember that
you are your child's first
and most important teacher.**

RESOURCES

If you have any questions:

Information and Referral for Sonoma County: 211

Community Action Partnership 707.544.6911

Head Start 707.544.6911

Child Care Referrals- 4C's 707.522.1413

Maternal, Child, Adolescent Health 1.800.427.8982

Parenting Classes- 707.585.6108
California Parenting Institute

Redwood Empire Food Bank 707.523.7900

First 5 Kit for New Parents 1.800.543.7025

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Prepared by:

Marta Flax Tilling, MSW
School Readiness Program Manager

With special thanks to all past and present members of our School Readiness team.



This is a guide for children entering “regular” kindergarten. If your child is entering, “transitional kindergarten,” remember that the expectations will be different.

Provide a **variety of experiences** to expand your child’s awareness of the world. Explore **together**, and discuss what you find.

- Ride the bus to new places
- Visit the park and search for bugs
- Go to the library for story time together
- Picnic at the beach and collect shells
- Visit a children’s museum



Give yourself a **“time-out”** if you get frustrated. Come back and deal with the issues calmly. Take care of yourself too! Parenting classes can be helpful.

If you have **questions** or **concerns**, keep asking teachers, office staff, doctors, etc. until you get the help you need for your child. Be persistent; you are your child’s **best advocate**.

Involve your child in community activities like sports, library, story times, and swim lessons.

**REMEMBER THAT KINDERGARTEN
IS A SPECIAL TIME.
ENJOY IT WITH YOUR CHILD.**

OTHER TIPS TO REMEMBER

Give your child lots of **love** and **attention**:

- Read, play, sing, talk with them each day; share experiences and feelings.
- Be **responsive** to your child's needs and answer questions.
- Give your child **praise** for genuine achievement; this builds positive attitudes and self-confidence. Give lots of hugs.
- Be consistent about behavioral expectations; inappropriate behavior **always** has consequences.

Make **safe** areas for playing inside and out; encourage doing things on his/her own.

It is also good to:

- Set up times to **play with other children** and visit with other parents; share information, concerns, and solutions to problems while your child builds social skills.
- Let children make a few **choices** (like the color of shirt or book to read) and develop **independence**; they learn from their successes **and** mistakes.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE CHILD

Being ready for kindergarten means more than having specific academic skills. It involves physical, emotional, and social development, as well as language skills and general knowledge.

Children develop at different rates, but the following are helpful guidelines for children entering kindergarten.



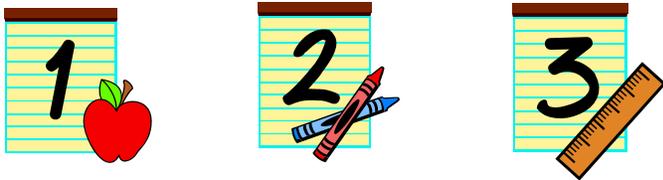
Physical Development

- Is healthy and well-nourished; has received well-child check-ups and dental exams as scheduled
- Is comfortable using pencil and crayons: can use scissors to cut on a line; can copy square shapes
- Can balance on one foot and hop on one foot
- Can catch a big ball
- Manages own dressing, feeding, and toileting

Social and Emotional Skills

- Feels comfortable in new situations and has a positive approach to new experiences and learning; is curious and excited about school

- Can follow two- and three-part directions, such as "Please get a book and sit down."
- Shares and takes turns; plays cooperatively with other children; uses good manners
- Asks and answers simple questions; seeks adult help when needed: "May I go to the bathroom?"
- Participates in group activities and is learning to play with friends; can separate from parents
- Can concentrate on activities and pay attention for at least 10 minutes
- Solves problems and makes decisions with other children



Math Skills

- Counts objects from 1 to 20; recognizes (and can name) some numerals from 1 to 10
- Sorts objects by size, color, shape; knows same/different, bigger/smaller, first/last
- Can give you: one, two, up to 5 objects
- Identifies shapes: circle, square, rectangle, triangle

- Play "I Spy." "I spy with my little eye a picture on this page that starts like 'dog'." Or "I spy something that rhymes with 'cat'."
- Encourage writing/drawing skills, including scribbling, at an early age. It doesn't have to be perfect! Let them choose the colors. Praise the effort: "I like the blue house."
- Offer opportunities for fine motor development: playing with building toys, drawing, writing, cutting, using play dough, and doing puzzles.



6. Encourage your child to:

- Have self-control and share attention with others; use words to solve problems because hitting and grabbing are not appropriate.
- Be patient when there is a wait
- Persist when challenges arise: "You can do it! Try again. It takes practice."
- Think of and carry out simple projects.
- Make good decisions and fulfill simple responsibilities, like having simple chores to do.



- Ask: “How many pennies do you have? Which glass has more milk? Which dog has fewer spots? If you have 2 cookies, and give one to your brother, how many will you have left? If you have 4 buttons, and I give you one more, how many will you have?”
 - Sing while you drive or walk. Singing and rhyming are fun ways to encourage language development. Dance around the house.
 - Do nursery rhymes and finger plays with your child. Make up silly songs. Read books that rhyme.
- 4.** Offer **safe** opportunities for gross motor development every day: running, climbing, throwing and catching balls, swimming, dancing, jump roping, bike riding, and hopping.
- 5.** Help your child **be ready to read and write. Practice is important.**
- Ask your child to draw a picture and tell you about it. Write down the story they tell. Read it over with him/her; point to each word.
 - Talk about beginning sounds: “Can you think of a word that starts with the same sound as your name?” (“David starts like dog.”)

Reading and Writing Skills

- Uses 5 to 7 word sentences
- Is familiar with books, enjoys listening to stories, and understands that print represents speech
- Draws a picture of him/herself
- Can state first and last name, recognizes name in print, and can (or is learning to) write own name
- Knows most upper case letter names
- Tells stories from pictures

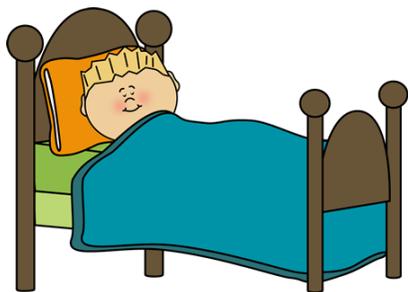
General Knowledge

- Knows some nursery rhymes and songs
- Can name colors: red, yellow, blue, green, orange, black, white, pink...
- Knows body parts
- Has some general knowledge about: animals, weather, vehicles, clothing, family, etc.

If your child is prepared in most of these areas, he/she will feel confident and comfortable in the classroom and will be ready to learn!

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE PARENT

As a **parent**, you have the **most important job** in preparing your child to be successful in kindergarten. You can help your child come to school ready to learn. You provide invaluable support for your child's learning and development at home. Work *with the school*. The following are some important guidelines.



1. The Importance of Routines

- Have specific bed and wake up times. Start early and have a regular, calming bedtime routine: brush teeth, talk about the day, sing, or read quietly. A child this age needs up **10 to 12 hours** each night, in order to be **well-rested and alert**.
- Send a **backpack** with your child each day. **Check it** each day for leftover lunch, finished work, notes from the teacher or the school, and homework assignments. Talk with your child about the finished work.

- Ask: "What was your favorite story? Why? What did you have for lunch? With whom did you play? How did you feel when that happened? What could you try instead?"
- Tell stories, using whole sentences and lots of words. "What happens next?" "Wow that was an interesting answer!"

2. Help your child learn **new words** to increase vocabulary.

- Explain what new words mean in words they can understand: "That tree is tremendous. Tremendous means very, very big!"
- Ask "What rhymes with *fun*." (run) Or "What is the opposite of *hot*?" (cold)
- Clap out the syllables of words/names: "Me-lis-sa," "al-pha-bet"

3. **Count and sing** with your child.

- Count the apples in the bowl, the shoes on the floor, the dogs in the picture, the crayons in the box, etc. "Show me 4 fingers: 1...2...3...4...4 fingers!"
- Sort items (coins, socks, silverware, toy cars) by color, size, shape
- Encourage mathematical thinking by asking questions.

- **Visit/volunteer** in the classroom; inquire about visiting rules. Volunteer for field trips. Be dependable. Join school parent groups. Attend Back-to-School Night. Stay aware of your child's progress. Don't wait until there is a big problem.
- Ask for information or help if needed. Your child's teacher, the people in the school office, your child's doctor or nurse, the family mentor, and people at your church can all be of help; keep asking for help if you need it.

ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

1. Talking to your child is the most important thing you can do to develop language. Language development is very important to school success.

- Explain how things work; why we do things the way we do and what would happen if we did them differently. Be positive.
- Talk about the **color** of the car, the **shape** of the sign, the **names** of the vegetables, the **sounds** the animals make, **number** of chairs, etc.
- Encourage language development by asking questions and providing information about the child's world. Describe what you are doing as you do it: "I am making a salad for dinner. First I have to wash the lettuce..."

- Homework , if given, is important. Set aside a specific time and place for it. Let your child know that it is always a priority! You can help, but remember that it is the child's work. Always check it when finished. "Let's get the homework done first, and then we can play."



- Read with your child at least 15 minutes a day, and make it fun! Talk about what you read; discuss the pictures, and use this as an opportunity to increase vocabulary. Reread favorites; children learn from repetition. This helps language development.
- Limit "screen-time" (videos, TV, video games, computer) to no more than 1 to 2 hours a day. Monitor what your child watches. Watch with your child; talk about it. Be clear about what is appropriate: violence is upsetting and harmful to children.
- Encourage reading, playing with toys and games, fantasy play, art projects, and physical activity. Children learn through play.



2. Health and Nutrition

- **A healthy breakfast** is key to a child's energy and concentration at school. Be sure to limit sugar content of breakfast foods. Eggs, yogurt, and low-sugar cereals (Cheerios, oatmeal) are healthy starts to the day.
- Ensure that your child receives a **nutritious snack and lunch** each day. You can pack a healthy, **sugar-free** snack for mid-morning (fruit, nuts, yogurt, crackers.) If you pack a lunch, pack nutritious foods: sandwich (peanut butter, cheese, tuna, meat, burrito), carrots and celery, and fruit. Limit sweets *and* portion size; label the lunch bag/box with the child's name. Sweetened drinks and sodas are **not** appropriate.
- Attend to **health and dental concerns** promptly. A child who does not feel well or is in pain cannot do his/her best in school.
- Have **regular medical and dental** checkups. Keep immunizations up to date.
- Keep a **sick** child home. The school has guidelines.



3. Relationship with School

- **Talk about school** with your child; be interested in what is going on. Listen. Ask questions that require more than a yes/no answer: "what was your favorite activity in school today?" Praise accomplishments, and work closely and promptly with your child **and** the teacher if problems arise.
- **Be on time.** Arrive around 15 minutes before school starts; leave your child at the door. Being on time is an important life skill. Arriving after class has started is very disruptive. If you are late, check in with the office before entering the class. Pick up your child promptly when school is over, or your child might have to wait in the office. Call immediately if there is a problem.
- **Regular attendance** is important. Missing any school makes it hard to keep up and to feel a part of the class. Schedule doctor and dentist appointments after school hours if possible. Medical emergencies and illness are appropriate absences; vacations are not. You must provide a note the next day when your child has been absent.
- **Communicate with school and the teacher.** Ask for a meeting, before or after school, if you have specific questions or concerns, or your child/family is having an unusual situation (death or birth in the family, job loss, illness of family member, etc.) These things affect your child's behavior in class and ability to learn.