



# getting reAdy

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Each year, more than 60,000 children enter Maryland's kindergarten classrooms. Most children enter school with the skills, knowledge and abilities they need to do kindergarten work and be successful. Being ready for school determines future school and life success.

As a parent, you play a key role in fostering school readiness: you are your child's first and most important teacher. By working with your child and your child's teachers, caregivers, and other service providers, you help your child to be fully ready for school.

### **School readiness starts at birth**

School readiness doesn't start in kindergarten. Instead, it begins at birth. Every day, your child grows, learns new things, and develops important skills. In fact, 90% of your child's brain growth happens before age five! The few years before kindergarten are simply the most important learning years in a child's life.

## parents can help!

As a parent, there are many things you can do with your child, starting at birth, to help him or her be ready for school. Everything you do with your child builds new skills. Encourage learning during daily activities, such as feeding, bathing, grocery shopping, and playing.

Help your child to be one of the kindergarteners who is fully ready to succeed. Give your child many opportunities to:

### get along with others

It is important for your child to get along with others, handle emotions, and express himself. To help build social and emotional skills: Hug, kiss, and cuddle your baby—it helps her feel secure and is an important first step in learning to get along with others. Encourage your child to try new activities and foods. Give him time to play alone and with others. Help her to make new friends by arranging play dates. Allow your child to make some decisions: choose the bedtime story, the afternoon snack, or his outfit. Tell your child how you expect him to behave: saying "please" and "thank you," cleaning up messes, taking care of toys, sharing, etc.

### run, jump, play and be healthy

Your child is growing and getting stronger everyday. To help your child's physical development: Go to a playground, play ball, jump rope, or take a walk in a park. Help her draw and cut with scissors. Let him practice zipping, snapping and buttoning. Show your child how to be safe and healthy: wash hands, brush teeth, hold an adult's hand when crossing the street, don't talk to strangers. Serve nutritious meals and snacks. Be sure she goes to the doctor for regular check-ups.

For more activities to help your child be ready for school, go to Ready At Five's web site [www.readyatfive.org](http://www.readyatfive.org) and visit the ParentTips and Resources sections.

## parents can help!

### talk, listen, read and write

It is important for your child to express himself and understand others. To build language & literacy skills: Talk to your baby in a warm and soothing voice. When your baby babbles, repeat the sounds. Read to your child everyday and talk about the story: What happened? Who was in the story? Teach your child to follow directions. Help your child learn the names of letters, especially letters that are in his name. Ask your child to find letters in the newspaper, on street signs and on food packages. Let your child draw, scribble, or practice writing letters. Tell nursery rhymes and ask your child to tell them back to you. Play rhyming games.

### count, sort, make shapes and patterns

Your child needs to have good mathematical thinking skills. She needs to know about shapes, patterns, numbers and how to solve problems. To build these skills: Choose infant toys that squeak, rattle, light up, or play music when they are handled—they teach “cause and effect.” Help your child learn the names of shapes. Ask your child to sort objects by color or shape. Make patterns (red-blue-red-blue). Explain ideas like “under” and “over.” Help your child learn to count things. Let your child help you cook and use the measuring cups/spoons.

### ask questions & explore

Young children love to imagine, ask questions, explore, discover, find the answers, and collect information. To help build these scientific thinking skills: Help your child to compare how things are alike and different. Show your child how to use his senses (look, listen, taste, touch, and smell) to get information. Ask your child to make predictions or guesses about what she thinks will happen. Let your child use science tools—magnets, magnifying glasses, or flashlights—when exploring.

### learn about people and places

Social studies is the study of how people live, work, get along and solve problems. To help your child learn in this area: Look at family photos and talk about the people in the pictures. Ask your child to tell you what she knows about herself, the family, the community, and people from different cultures. Talk about the different jobs that people do. Look at maps with your child.

### be creative

The arts involve both enjoying and engaging in dance, drama, music and art. To help: Sing songs. Let your child draw and paint. Listen to music with your child and help her dance, clap, snap or tap to the beat of the music. Look at art—in museums, in books, and on the walls—and talk about what you see.