

## Sight Words

Learning “sight words” (words that appear often in beginning reading books) will help your kindergartener become a better, more confident reader.

To help your child learn sight words, write each word on an index card and go over them together. Start by focusing on just a few words, and add new words as you go. *Be sure to keep the learning playful and fun!*

Here are 30 sight words your child should know by the end of the year.

a	come	in	my	this
am	do	is	no	to
an	go	it	on	up
and	he	like	see	we
at	here	look	so	went
can	I	me	the	you

If you ever have concerns about your child’s progress, or if you’re looking for additional ways to help build your child’s reading skills at home, talk to your child’s teacher. *When parents and teachers work together, great things can happen.*

***Your support and involvement are key to your child’s success in school!***



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Building Reading Skills

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# Building Reading Skills



**Letters, Sounds, and Words**

## Share a love of reading

### Visit the library on a regular basis

- ▶ Take part in library reading programs and story hours.
- ▶ Get your child his/her own library card and help choose books to check out. (Dr. Seuss books are great for this age.)

### Make reading important in your home

- ▶ Encourage family members to give books as gifts for birthdays and other occasions.
- ▶ Designate a special place in your home to store your child’s books.
- ▶ Seek out age-appropriate magazines such as *Highlights for Children* or *ZooBooks*.
- ▶ Have a special reading time for all family members.
- ▶ Be a good role model. Read newspapers, books, and magazines for information and pleasure, and talk about what you’ve read. *“I read a really interesting article today about...”*
- ▶ Develop a reading routine, such as reading a bedtime story to your child each night.



# Building Reading Skills

**A strong foundation in reading will help set your child up for success in elementary school—and beyond.**

Kindergarteners spend a good deal of time in school developing the skills they need to read. As your kindergartener works on these skills in school, there are a number of things you can do at home to help further develop your child's reading skills.

The activities presented here take very little time and are easy to do. Enjoy this exciting time as your child begins to discover the joy of reading!

*Kindergarteners have a wide range of reading skills, and their skills develop at varying rates. At this age, learning should be playful and fun—and children should always feel good about what they are able to do.*

## Read aloud to your child

Reading books together expands vocabulary, stimulates the imagination, and teaches children to listen. It also nurtures a special bond between you and your child.

As you read, talk about the story and the pictures. Ask questions, such as:

*"What do you think will happen next?"*

*"What would you do?"*

Connect your child's experiences to what's happening in the story. *"She has a dog just like we do. Do you think her dog is as big as our dog?"*

As you read, move your finger under the words to help your child learn that words go from top to bottom and left to right.

## Look for words in everyday life

**Increase your child's interest in reading by showing that words are all around us.**

- ▶ When driving, look for familiar words on street signs, store fronts, and billboards.
- ▶ Throughout the day (e.g., while watching TV, playing games, running errands, shopping), point out words your child might know.

## Practice letters, sounds, and words

These activities will help your child learn letters and sounds, and understand how letters make words.

- ▶ Read an ABC picture book and practice the sound each letter makes.
- ▶ Spell simple words with refrigerator magnets.
- ▶ Play "I spy." *"I spy a lamp. Can you think of a word that starts with the same sound as lamp?"* Take turns spying an object and coming up with a word that starts with the same letter sound.
- ▶ Put a few familiar words on paper squares and help arrange them into a simple sentence.  

I	can	run
---	-----	-----
- ▶ When you're riding in a car or taking a walk, play a rhyming word game. *"I see a cat. Can you think of a word that rhymes with cat?"*

## Retelling Stories

A critical part of the reading process is being able to retell a story. Ask your child to retell a familiar story such as *The Three Bears*, or flip through a favorite picture book and have your child retell the story in his/her own words.

## Everyday Writing

# Building Writing Skills



### Moving from Letters to Words

As the year progresses, your child will go from practicing letters to writing words and short sentences. Throughout the year, create meaningful writing activities at home, and look for ways to encourage writing.

- ▶ Paste pictures of family members and friends onto a sheet of paper. Help your child write the corresponding name.
- ▶ Have your child dictate a sentence to you. Your child will then be able to see how his/her thoughts look in print.
- ▶ Help your child complete sentences, such as  
I like \_\_\_\_\_.  
My favorite food is \_\_\_\_\_.  
I am good at \_\_\_\_\_.
- ▶ As your kindergartener's writing skills improve, encourage your child to draw a picture and write a sentence or two about things or events that have meaning to him/her (e.g., a trip to the zoo, a pet). Be sure to ask your child to read what he/she has written back to you.

Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar—those will come later. The important thing is to encourage your child's writing.

Show your child that writing is an important part of our everyday lives, and that there is a purpose to writing.

- ▶ Help your child write a thank you note for a gift, or a get well note to a sick friend.
- ▶ Hang a message chalkboard in your home and encourage your child to write on it.
- ▶ Have your child sign birthday and greeting cards.
- ▶ Ask your child to write his/her name on artwork and help add a title (e.g., My Family, Black Cat). Proudly display the artwork for all to enjoy.
- ▶ Let your child dictate a letter to a loved one. As his/her skills develop, have your child write part of the letter.

If you ever have concerns about your child's progress, or if you are looking for additional ways to help build writing skills at home, talk to your child's teacher.

*When parents and teachers work together, great things can happen.*

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Writing Letters and Words



## Building Writing Skills

**From the first scribbles your child made as a toddler, he/she has been learning how to write.**

Children spend a good deal of time in kindergarten learning how to write letters and words. As your kindergartener works on his/her writing skills in school, there are a number of things you can do at home to help further develop your child's skills.

The activities presented here take very little time, and they're easy to do. Enjoy this exciting time as your child learns how to put his/her thoughts down on paper!

*Kindergarteners have a wide range of writing skills, and their skills develop at varying rates. At this age, learning should be playful and fun—and children should always feel good about what they are able to do.*

### Stock up on supplies

**Encourage your child to practice writing by having supplies readily available.**

- ▶ Provide different kinds of paper, crayons, pencils, markers, and notepads. Also provide a large eraser. (Erasers on the ends of pencils are difficult for young children to use.)
- ▶ Chalkboards and dry erase boards with various colors of chalk and markers provide a fun way for children to practice their writing skills.

### Develop hand muscles and motor skills

**Young children need strong hand muscles to hold a pencil correctly, and small motor skills to be able to use a pencil to write.**

To strengthen hand muscles:

- ▶ Provide playdough or clay to squeeze, pull, and manipulate into shapes.
- ▶ Wad newspaper up into balls and throw them into a wastebasket.

To help develop small motor skills:

- ▶ Help your child put a puzzle together, string beads, and build with blocks.
- ▶ Let your child cut up colored paper and magazines using child safe scissors.

### Practice making letters

**Practice makes perfect. Help your child learn the right way to write.**

- ▶ Demonstrate the proper way to grip a pencil, and show your child how to steady the paper.
- ▶ Make sure that your child is forming letters correctly, and talk about how letters go from left to right and top to bottom.
- ▶ Teach your child how to write his/her name with the first letter capitalized and the rest lowercase.

### Make writing fun

**Be creative. Look for fun and interesting ways to practice writing. Here are just a few ideas.**

- ▶ Use sidewalk chalk to practice writing words on the driveway or sidewalk.
- ▶ Give your child letters and numbers to trace.
- ▶ Write letters or words on steamy windows.
- ▶ Put salt or sugar on a cookie sheet and write letters with your fingers.
- ▶ Play a guessing game by making "air" letters.
- ▶ Have fun using finger paint to practice writing letters and numbers.



## Thinking About Numbers

**To do well in math, students need to understand how numbers work together.**

While it's important to learn that  $6 + 4 = 10$ , it is even more important for students to understand that if you put a group of 6 blocks together with a group of 4 blocks, you will have 10 blocks—and that a group of 3 blocks and 7 blocks is also 10 blocks.

Young children often learn math concepts best using objects such as blocks or beads. (You may have heard teachers refer to these kinds of items as *manipulatives*.) Using objects to show how numbers work together will help give your child a strong foundation in math. And this foundation will make it much easier for your child to learn more complex math concepts later on.

If you are looking for more ways to help build math skills at home, talk to your child's teacher. *When parents and teachers work together, great things can happen.*

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# Building Math Skills



**Numbers, Groups, and Shapes**

## Shapes and Groupings

Help your kindergartener learn basic shapes. Also practice grouping and sorting items so that your child will understand that objects can be put into categories.

- ▶ Sort Legos or blocks by shape or color.
- ▶ Have a "treasure hunt" in which your child tries to find objects of a particular shape or color around the house.
- ▶ Match socks or put coins into categories (pennies, nickels, quarters, etc.).

## Math Vocabulary

Learning math vocabulary is an important part of kindergarten math.

- ▶ Talk about equal, same, and different. *"What's different about these two flowers?"*
- ▶ Play "Simon Says" to practice positions. *"Simon Says put the book behind your back." (under your chin, over your head...)*
- ▶ Look for opportunities to discuss relative terms such as more, less, bigger, smaller, lighter, heavier, taller, shorter, longer, etc. *"Which of these glasses has more juice?"*



# Building Math Skills

**A strong foundation in math will help your child succeed in elementary school and beyond.**

Kindergarteners spend a good deal of time in school learning about numbers. They also learn about shapes, and how to sort and group items.

As your child works on math skills and concepts in school, there are a number of things you can do at home to further develop your kindergartener's math skills.

The math activities presented in this guide take very little time, and they're easy for any parent to do. *Be sure to always make math activities such as these playful and fun!*

*Math skills build on top of each other, which is why students need to master one skill before going on to the next—and why it is so important for young students to develop a strong math foundation.*

## Look for numbers in everyday life

**Increase your child's interest in math by showing that numbers are all around us.**

- ▶ As you drive around town, point out the numbers you see on buildings, billboards, and road signs.
- ▶ Talk about the numbers you see on household items (e.g., calendars, cereal boxes, clocks).

## Involve your child

**Throughout the day, look for opportunities to count items and use numbers.**

- ▶ Ask your child to bring you a specific number of objects, such as four spoons or five cups.
- ▶ Have your child count the carrots on his/her plate, the coins in your wallet, or the socks coming out of the dryer. Before eating a bag of M&Ms, count how many there are of each color.
- ▶ Purchase "color by number" and "connect the dots" coloring books.
- ▶ Have your child help you while grocery shopping. "Help me find a bunch of six bananas."
- ▶ When you see or talk about a number, ask what number comes next. "We're reading page 11. What number comes after 11?"

## Play math games with your child

**Playing games is a great way to learn math, and it's fun for everyone.**

- ▶ Play board games that require moving a number of spaces, or card games such as "Go Fish."
- ▶ Take part in games that require counting or scoring (e.g., throwing balls into a basket).

## Talk about numbers that matter

**Relating numbers to things important in your child's life makes numbers more meaningful.**

- ▶ Use the bathroom scale to measure your child's weight. "Let's see how much you weigh."
- ▶ Make a chart showing your child's height. "You've grown two inches this year!"
- ▶ Use a calendar to count the days until a special event. "Let's count how many days there are until it's your birthday."

*By the end of the year, your child should be able to count to 100, write numbers up to 20, and give you the "next number" for numbers from 1 to 100.*

## If Your Child is Shy

For a child who is shy, the social aspect of kindergarten can be stressful. If your child is shy, here are some ways you can help.

- ▶ Go to new places where your child is around different people. These outings will help your kindergartener feel more at ease in new situations.
- ▶ Don't answer for your child when someone asks him/her a question.
- ▶ Sometimes shy children need a little nudge. Try nudging a bit, but don't push.
- ▶ Most importantly, provide lots of support, love, encouragement, and hugs.

If you ever have concerns about your child's progress, or if you are looking for additional ways to help build your child's social skills at home, talk to your child's teacher. *When parents and teachers work together, great things can happen.*

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# Building Social Skills



## Making Friends and Getting Along

## The Art of Making Friends

Children who have the social skills necessary to make friends share certain character traits. Of course, no child possesses all of these traits all of the time, but this list will give you an idea of the traits you want to foster in your kindergartener.

### 10 Positive Character Traits

1. Knows how to take turns
2. Treats others' property with respect
3. Listens to others and doesn't interrupt
4. Is willing to share
5. Offers to help others
6. Feels empathy for a child who is sad or in trouble
7. Gives other children compliments
8. Has good hygiene
9. Is okay with losing
10. Acts friendly to other children

*Remember that your child doesn't need a dozen friends to be happy; a few good ones will do just fine.*





# Building Social Skills

**Kindergarteners have a lot to deal with—new school, new teacher, new classmates, and new routines. Kindergarten also presents students with a whole new world of social interactions.**

Kindergarteners have very different levels of social skills. Some children are social butterflies—others are quiet and reserved. For all children, kindergarten is a new adventure, and it usually takes a little while for most to feel comfortable in this new environment.

*Listed here are a number of things you can do to help your child build his/her social skills. These things don't take much time, and they are easy for any parent to do.*

## Help Develop Communication Skills

**In order to have good social skills one must be able to communicate well with others. Communication involves both speaking and listening—two skills that you can help develop.**

### Speaking Skills

- ▶ Ask your kindergartener to tell you about what he/she did that day. Ask specific questions and listen attentively.  
*"Who did you play with at recess?"*  
*"What did you have for a snack?"*
- ▶ Visit new places and talk about what you see and do. Make every outing an opportunity to have conversations—and an opportunity for your child to learn new vocabulary.

### Listening Skills

- ▶ When you're reading stories to your child, ask questions to help sharpen his/her listening skills.  
*"What do you think will happen next?"*
- ▶ Give your child two or three step directions to follow, and ask him/her to repeat them back to you. *"Wash your face, brush your teeth, and choose a book for us to read."*
- ▶ Play games that require following directions, such as "Simon Says."

## Help Develop Social Skills

**Most children do not start kindergarten with good social skills. These take time and practice.**

### Provide social opportunities

- ▶ Set up play dates with classmates, and look for social opportunities with family and friends.
- ▶ Try to let children settle their own differences, but stay within earshot so that you can model problem solving behavior if needed. *"Why don't you take turns playing with that toy?"*

### Encourage your child to use words

- ▶ Teach your kindergartener how to express his/her sad and angry feelings with words.
- ▶ Role-play situations your child may encounter at school. *"Let's practice what you'll say to Carly the next time she takes your crayons."*

### Teach positive social behavior

- ▶ Play games. Games help children learn how to take turns—and how to win and lose.
- ▶ Be a good role model. When children see their parents being friendly and treating others with respect, they are likely to do the same.
- ▶ Praise your child when you see him/her using good social skills.

## Life Skills Checklist

These are some of the basic life skills that children typically master before and during kindergarten.

- Drink from a cup and open a juice box
- Use the restroom and wash their hands
- Blow their nose and cover their mouth when sneezing or coughing
- Get their jacket on and off
- Operate zippers, snaps, and buttons
- Use eating utensils properly
- Follow two and three step directions  
"Take off your jacket and hang it up."
- Take care of their belongings
- Respect the property of others
- Take turns and share

If you are looking for more ways to help build life skills at home, talk to your child's teacher. When parents and teachers work together, great things can happen.

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## Help Your Child Grow

Help your child become more independent and confident by providing a home where there's not only love, but where there are also rules and routines.

### ► Rules

We all feel more comfortable when we know what we can and can't do.

*"I can have a cookie after dinner, but not before." Olivia*

*"I'm not allowed to run in the house." John*

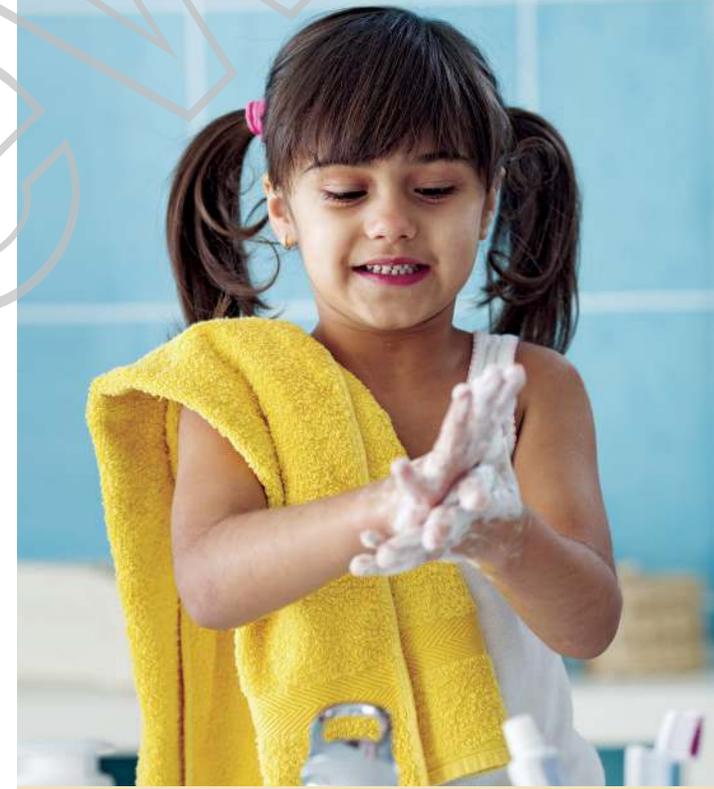
### ► Routines

Routines empower and comfort young children. When they have routines to follow, children know exactly what they are supposed to do.

*"Before I go to bed, I put on my pajamas, wash my face and hands, brush my teeth, and pick out a book." Sophia*

*When children have rules and routines at home, the day runs smoother, and children are better able to adapt to rules and routines at school.*

# Building Basic Life Skills



Promoting Independence



## Building Basic Life Skills

**In kindergarten, children are expected to be able to take care of more things on their own.**

By teaching your child some basic life skills, you can help your little one be more independent and confident, and more successful in kindergarten.

Young children become more self-sufficient by doing things for themselves, taking on responsibilities, and learning to make choices.

As children take on new challenges, it's important for parents to show they have faith in their child's abilities. Of course, parents should be available to step in and help when their child needs it.

*"It is not what you do for your children, but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings."*

*Ann Landers*

### Teach Self-Care Skills

**Kindergarten teachers can't possibly assist every child with his/her jacket or juice box. Teachers need students to be able to take care of these kinds of things on their own.**

**Use these tips to help your child become more self-sufficient.**

#### 1. Getting dressed

It may take a bit longer for your kindergartener to get dressed without your help, but that's how your child is going to learn.

Make sure zippers, buttons, and snaps are easy to manage, and buy shoes with Velcro fasteners.

#### 2. Eating meals and snacks

Teach your child the proper way to hold utensils, how to open a juice box, use a napkin, and tidy up the area when he/she is finished eating.

#### 3. Personal hygiene

Kindergarteners need to know how to wash their face and hands, brush their teeth, and use the restroom on their own.

*When something is difficult, don't immediately swoop in to help. Instead, let your child try to problem solve, and celebrate when he/she is successful.*

### Teach Responsibility

**Giving your child age-appropriate chores will help teach responsibility.**

- ▶ Give your child simple household tasks such as feeding the dog, helping set the table, watering the plants, or helping carry in groceries.
- ▶ Make your little one responsible for chores such as picking up toys, making his/her bed, and putting dirty clothes in the laundry basket.

*When you give your kindergartener a task, make sure that it's completed. It's important for children to learn to finish what they start.*

*Praise your child for a job well done, and also for good effort. Make the praise as specific as you can. "I like how neatly you put the books on the shelf."*

### Give choices

**Making choices at home will help your child be able to make good choices and decisions in the classroom, and on the playground. As a part of your daily routine, ask questions such as these:**

*"Do you want to wear your blue or your green shirt?"*

*"Should we have grilled cheese or tacos for lunch?"*

*"What game do you want to play tonight?"*



## Small Motor Skills Checklist

These are some of the small motor skills that children typically master before and during kindergarten.

- Puts simple puzzles together
- Builds with blocks
- Colors mostly within the lines
- Draws a person with body parts
- Cuts with scissors on a straight line
- Holds and uses crayons, markers, and pencils correctly
- Traces lines and basic shapes
- Prints first name, using capital and small letters
- Uses paste or glue with little mess
- Strings beads together
- Uses a spoon without spilling

If you are looking for additional ways to help your child build motor skills, talk to your child's teacher. *When parents and teachers work together, great things can happen.*

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## Large Motor Skills Checklist

These are some of the large motor skills that children typically master before and during kindergarten.

- Catches a ball with two hands
- Bounces, kicks, and throws a ball
- Runs and skips
- Jumps forward with feet together
- Stands on one foot
- Hops on either foot
- Walks backwards
- Walks on tiptoes
- Maintains momentum on a swing
- Goes up and down steps with alternating feet

*Remember, children develop at different rates and there is a wide range of what's considered "normal" at this age. Provide your child with lots of opportunities to develop both large and small motor skills—and keep activities playful and fun!*

# Building Motor Skills



**Small and Large Motor Skills**



# Building Motor Skills

**Helping your child develop motor skills will give your kindergartener confidence, and help your little one be more successful—both in school and at play.**

Kindergarteners are on the go. They are able to do more physically, and their ability to do things with their fingers and hands is improving. Their large and small motor skills are making life more interesting and a lot more fun!

**Large Motor Skills** involve movement of the muscles in the arms, legs, and torso. Large motor skills are used on the playground, in sports, and other physical activities.

**Small Motor Skills** involve movement of the muscles in the hands and fingers. Small motor skills are needed to perform tasks such as drawing, cutting, and writing.

## Building Large Motor Skills

Developing large motor skills helps build core strength for sitting, and stamina for academic tasks. It also strengthens eye-hand coordination, which is essential for reading and writing.

Here are some ways you can help develop your child's large motor skills.

### Go outdoors

- ▶ Play catch in the backyard.
- ▶ Practice jumping rope or hula hooping.
- ▶ Have fun running, skipping, and hopping.
- ▶ Play hopscotch on the driveway.
- ▶ Play backyard games such as Freeze Tag.
- ▶ Kick a soccer ball back and forth.

### Provide an indoor play space

- ▶ Put on some music and have a dance party.
- ▶ Play games like "Twister" or "Simon Says."
- ▶ Have your child practice lifting a knee and touching it with the opposite hand (crossing the midline helps with brain development).
- ▶ Do jumping jacks.

*Make exercise a family affair. Take a nature hike or enjoy a family bike ride. Also, set a good example by making physical activity a part of your daily routine.*

## Developing Small Motor Skills

Small motor skills are needed to perform a variety of kindergarten "desk activities." Developing these skills will help your child be a better student, and enjoy school more.

Here are some ways you can help develop your child's small motor skills.

### Stock up on supplies

- ▶ To encourage drawing and writing, have paper, pencils, crayons, and markers always available.
- ▶ Provide playdough or clay to develop hand muscles.
- ▶ Get a pair of child-safe scissors and let your child cut up colored paper and magazines.

### Build skills during play time

- ▶ Help your child put a puzzle together, string beads, and build with blocks.
- ▶ Build a house out of playing cards together.

### Build skills doing everyday activities

- ▶ Practice zipping and unzipping a jacket, and buttoning and unbuttoning a shirt.
- ▶ Have your child help with household chores such as folding napkins, brushing a pet, or measuring recipe ingredients.