

Family Focus

Building a Foundation for School Success

Getting Ready for School Smooth and Successful Transitions

Transitioning from one early childhood setting to another or starting school in a formal setting for the first time can be overwhelming for both children and adults. Meeting new people, adjusting to a new routine and classroom environment can make children excited, anxious, or nervous. Whether your child is transitioning into a prekindergarten program or to kindergarten, it is important to talk with them and prepare them and yourself for the new experience. Having a plan and being prepared before the first day of school can help lessen the anxiety and pressure around the first day of school.

Use this checklist to help you get your child ready for the transition:

- Read books about going to prekindergarten/kindergarten.
- Set up a time to visit the new program and teacher.
- Talk with your child about the new routine. Include how your child will get to the new program and who will be dropping off and picking them up.
- Let your child know whether any friends that will be attending the new program.
- Provide opportunities for your child to ask questions about school.
- Talk about how your routine will be changing. For example, if you need to leave home earlier and bedtime will change, talk about the change.
- Practice saying the name of your child's new teacher with your child.
- Before the first day, help your child pack their backpack and/or lunchbox. Help them choose what they will wear on the first day of school and lay it out the night before.

Use this checklist to help prepare you for the transition:

- Contact the school for registration information and secure all necessary documents for registering your child.
- Make an appointment to tour the school or classroom before the first day of school.
- Start a calendar to keep track of important dates such as orientation, open house, the first day of school, etc.
- Plan how your child will get to and from school each day. For example, if they are riding the bus, where will they get off, who will meet them, etc.
- Prepare yourself for the first day of school. Support your child while keeping your own emotions in check (if you are worried or concerned try not to let those emotions show).
- Ask your child how the first day of school went. Talk about the routine, new friends, what was interesting, and what was learned.
- Check your child's backpack daily once school begins.

Books for Children Transitioning to Preschool

- *What to Expect at Preschool* by Heidi Murkoff
- *The Night Before Preschool* by Natasha Wing
- *Maisy Goes to Preschool* by Lucy Cousins
- *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
- *Llama Llama Misses Mama* by Anna Dewdney

Books for Children Transitioning to Kindergarten

- *When You Go to Kindergarten* by James Howe
- *Look Out Kindergarten Here I Come* by Nancy Carlson
- *Kindergarten ABC* by Jacqueline Rogers
- *Miss Kindergarten Gets ready for Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate
- *Monkey Not ready for Kindergarten* by Marc Brown

Resources for Families

- ❖ [*A Parent's Guide to a Successful Kindergarten Transition \(NEA\)*](#)
- ❖ National PTA in partnership with the National Education Association produced several [*Family Guides*](#) preparing children for their new learning adventure as they transition to kindergarten and beyond in “Starting Off Kindergarten Right” and “Preparing Your Child for School.” These guides are also available [*in Spanish*](#).
- ❖ [*Special Education: From Pre-K to Graduation and Beyond \(National PTA\)*](#)
- ❖ Sesame Street produced [*“Sesame Family, Kindergarten Here We Come!”*](#) which includes a Sesame Street themed backpack Parent Guide with videos and hands-on materials to help guide parents with their transition discussions with children
- ❖ [*Head Start’s website*](#) includes a video made about the transition to kindergarten from the perspective of children and an activity calendar for families.
- ❖ [*Count Down to Kindergarten*](#) is a website with several resources for families including 10 Steps for a [*First Trip to School*](#) and [*What Makes a Good Kindergarten*](#).