

Livingston Parish Public Schools
Livingston, Louisiana



Getting Your Child Ready for
Kindergarten

One of a series of Parent Guides from



Livingston Parish Public Schools Livingston, Louisiana

Parent Guide

Getting Your Child Ready for **Kindergarten**

The Parent Institute
P.O. Box 7474
Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
1-800-756-5525
www.parent-institute.com

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D. Executive Editor: Jeff Peters. Writer: Kris Amundson. Senior Editor: Betsie Ridnour. Staff Editors: Pat Hodgdon, Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley. Editorial Assistant: Pat Carter. Marketing Director: Laura Bono. Business Manager: Sally Bert. Operations & Technical Services Manager: Barbara Peters. Customer Service Manager: Pam Beltz. Customer Service Associates: Peggy Costello, Louise Lawrence, Elizabeth Hipfel & Margie Supervielle. Business Assistant: Donna Ross. Marketing Assistant: Joyce Ghen. Circulation Associates: Marsha Phillips, Catalina Lalande & Diane Perry.

Copyright © 2010 by The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

Licensed for distribution by Livingston Parish Public Schools through November 2013.

Livingston Parish Public Schools Livingston, Louisiana

Table of Contents

Introduction .....	.2
What Children Need to Know .....	.2
Language Skills .....	.3
Math Skills .....	.4
Basic Learning Skills .....	.5
Emotional Skills .....	.6
Motor Skills .....	.7
Making a Choice .....	.7
Should You 'Red-Shirt' Your Child? .....	.8
As the First Day Approaches .....	.9
For More Information .....	.10
Other Parent Guides Available From The Parent Institute® .....	.11

Introduction

Do you remember your first day of school? No matter how old we get, most of us can still recall most of the details from that big event, right down to the new shoes we wore.

Starting kindergarten is one of the biggest days in a child's life. For most children, it's the beginning of a school career that will take them from learning their colors to learning about the solar system, and from tying their shoes to solving complicated math problems.

Some children, however, don't have such a happy beginning. They don't make friends. They can't concentrate. They struggle with the skills they are supposed to master. Not long ago, kindergarten was a low-key year for most children. They learned how to get along with other children. They also mastered a few basic skills—for example, recognizing numbers and letters—so they would be ready for a more academic first-grade year.



Today, the emphasis on higher standards for all children has led to big changes in kindergarten. Many kindergartners are now expected to do what was once considered first-grade work.

How can you make sure your child is prepared for kindergarten?

That's the purpose of this Parent Guide. It reviews current research on what children need to know before starting kindergarten. It outlines the "basics" that many schools expect before children start school. And it offers suggestions on ways you can help your child get ready for the big day.

What Children Need to Know

Schools across the country have varied policies for admitting children to kindergarten. The items included in the checklists below reflect the expectations of many schools. But each school has a slightly different approach to kindergarten, so you should still contact the school your child will attend.

Kindergartners need a variety of skills—from basic learning skills to a knowledge of mathematical concepts. Following are some questions you can ask yourself about your child. After each section are some suggestions of how you can work on that area at home.

**Each child is unique, so this publication alternates using masculine and feminine pronouns.*

Language Skills

Parents worry about how soon their children will learn to read. But success in kindergarten involves other basic language skills. Children entering kindergarten need to know how to express their thoughts and how to listen to others. Following are the language skills children need.

**“Learning
is a treasure
which accompanies
its owner
everywhere.”**

—Chinese Proverb

To help your child develop language skills:

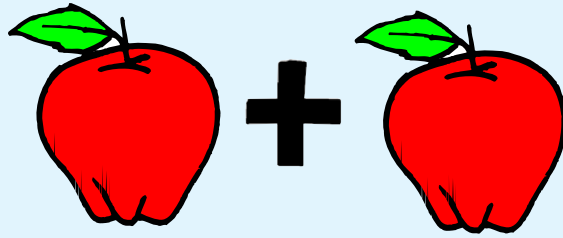
- **Read, read, read.** Make reading aloud a regular part of your day, even if your child asks you to read the same thing over and over.
- **Make regular visits** to your library. Get your child a library card as soon as it's allowed.
- **Get a set of magnetic letters.** Help your child practice spelling a few words, such as her name.
- **Talk to your child.** Engage her in conversations about your day, etc.
- **Label objects** in your child's room or other rooms in the house.
- **Play rhyming games.** Think of a word, such as hat. How many words can you think of that rhyme with it?
- **Let your child talk** on the phone at times. It will give her practice in speaking clearly and in listening to what other people have to say.
- **Ask questions** as you're reading. Stop and say, "What do you think will happen next?" Or "Does this story remind you of anything that has happened to you?"

Does your child:

	Yes	Not Yet
1. Listen to stories without interrupting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Sing or recite nursery rhymes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Recognize her first name in print?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Identify rhyming words?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Identify the beginning sounds of some words?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Identify some alphabet letters?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Recognize some common "sight words" (words that can be recognized instantly without sounding them out, such as <i>you</i> , <i>stop</i> and <i>look</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Math Skills

Who's taller—Mike or Sam? How long until dinner time? Even these basic questions involve math skills. Children entering kindergarten need to know more than just how to count from one to 10 to be successful in kindergarten. Following are the math skills children need.



To help your child learn basic math skills:

- **Count things**—buttons, snaps, sleeves, socks. “One sock, two socks. One shoe, two shoes.”
- **Teach your child to think about sequence.** Ask, “What should we put on first? What should we put on next?”
- **Play a matching game.** On five index cards, write the numerals from 1 to 5. On five other cards, draw the number of dots representing each numeral. See if your child can match up the numeral 1 with the card showing one dot, and so on. Later, add the numbers 6 to 10.
- **Make a number line.** Use chalk outside to draw a number line that goes from 1 to 10. Let your child stand on any number, then give him instructions, such as “Move forward two spaces” or “Step back four spaces.”
- **Make a play clock.** Write numbers on a paper plate to make it look like a clock. Using a paper fastener, attach “hands” made of sturdy material, such as poster board. Help your child set the clock for different times, such as breakfast time or bedtime.

For other simple counting and math activities to try at home, visit Coolmath4parents.com at www.coolmath4parents.com/getready.htm.

Does your child:

	Yes	Not Yet
1. Show understanding of general times of day (morning, afternoon, evening)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Know at least three shapes (circle, triangle, square)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Recognize groups of one, two, three, four and five objects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Count to 10?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Basic Learning Skills

Some of the skills children need for kindergarten don't fit neatly into any category. But a knowledge of colors and the ability to put like things together are important for learning many subjects.

“Children are likely to live up to what you believe in them.”

—Lady Bird Johnson

To help your child develop basic learning skills:

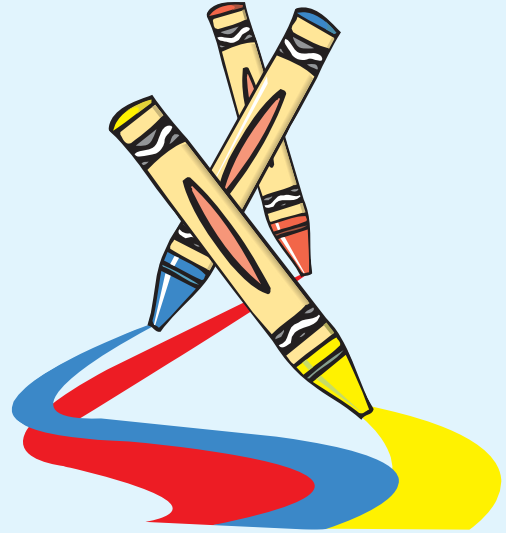
- **Provide toys** that require thinking. These include puzzles, blocks or sorting toys.
- **Use scraps** and other things from around the house for arts and crafts.
- **Play “Simon Says.”** For example, “Simon says, ‘Put your hands over your head.’” “Simon says, ‘Turn around three times.’”
- **Play “I Spy”** with colors. See how many red things your child can find today, how many blue things she can find tomorrow.
- **Make comparisons** to teach your child about *more* and *less*, *bigger* and *smaller*. “Who has *more* buttons, you or Dad? Whose shoes are *bigger*, yours or Marco’s?”
- **Teach your child her address** and phone number.
- **Teach your child how to write** her first name, using capital and lowercase letters. Make sure she knows her last name, even if she cannot write it.
- **Use words like *please*** and *thank you*, and expect your child to use them, too.

Does your child:

	Yes	Not Yet
1. Recognize at least five colors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Follow simple directions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Retell a simple story after she has listened to it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Classify things that go together (<i>knife/fork, shoe/sock</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Know words that signal position, size or direction (<i>up/down, bigger/smaller, over/under, first/last</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Know her first and last name?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Know her address and phone number?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Manage bathroom needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Emotional Skills

In kindergarten, teachers want children to have control of their emotions so they can spend their time learning. Your child will interact with many other children. He'll experience new and possibly frustrating situations. He'll need to know how to express his emotions in words when things don't go as he hopes.



To help your child develop the emotional skills needed for kindergarten:

- **Teach your child how to behave** rather than punishing him for misbehavior.
- **Show your love** for your child. Frequent hugs and smiles make your child feel secure.
- **Set limits.** If he acts out, let him know you love him, but not his behavior.
- **Help your child find words** to describe feelings.
- **Find opportunities** for your child to be with other children. Join a play group or go to story time at the library.
- **Give your child small responsibilities** around your home (making his bed, picking up toys, helping in the yard).
- **Have a regular bedtime.**

Does your child:

	Yes	Not Yet
1. Use words to solve problems when angry or upset?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Wait his turn and share with others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Play with other children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Spend some time away from you without getting upset?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Name specific emotions? (Is he <i>mad</i> or <i>sad</i> when he's upset?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Say <i>please</i> and <i>thank you</i> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Motor Skills

From cutting with scissors to tying their shoes, kindergartners are expected to master many tasks that involve both their large and small muscles. Luckily, many of the activities that help children improve in this area are fun things you may already be doing with your child.

To help your child develop physically:

- **Take your child to a park.** Play on outdoor equipment. Throw and catch a ball. Let your child ride a tricycle or jump rope.
- **Allow your child time** to dress herself in the morning.
- **Let your child use safety scissors.** Get out old magazines and let her cut away.
- **Give your child a chance to write,** color and draw. Keep pens and crayons handy.

Does your child:

	Yes	Not Yet
1. Cut with scissors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Trace basic shapes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Button shirts, pants, coats and zip up zippers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Hold a pencil or crayon correctly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Put together a small puzzle?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Run, jump and skip?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Bounce and catch a ball?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Making a Choice

You may have a choice of where to send your child. For example, you may be looking at a private school as well as your neighborhood public school. In some cases, you may have more than one choice within the public schools, so be sure to call the school district. Your child might be eligible to attend a magnet or charter school.

Before you make a choice, visit the school. Think about how your child might do in the classroom. Are all the children expected to sit quietly at their desks, or do children move around? How does that fit with your child's style? Does she like to sit still, or is she more active?

Talk to your child's preschool teacher, too. She may be able to give you good advice on the kind of program that would best suit your child.

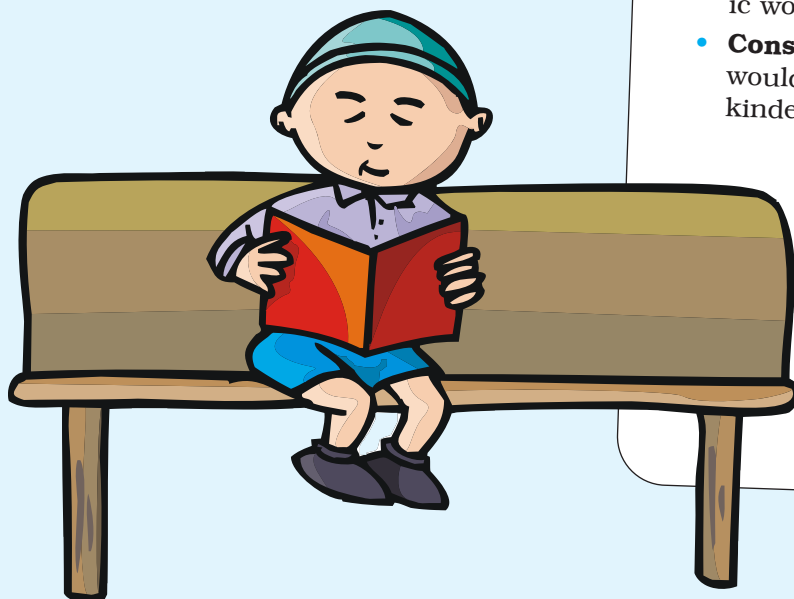
Should You 'Red-Shirt' Your Child?

Your child has a summer birthday, and he would be one of the youngest in his class. Should you hold him back for another year?

A growing number of parents are "red-shirting" their children. In athletics, the practice of red-shirting postpones a student athlete's participation in college sports for a year to provide him extra time to gain strength and skill.

In real life, many parents know that the youngest child in a class may be immature and unable to tackle the tasks that other children accomplish with ease. As kindergarten classrooms become more academic, and as children are expected to learn more and more in this first year, parents are worried that their child may not be able to keep up.

About nine percent of children—mostly boys—are held out of school for an extra year. The research on the practice of "red-shirting" is inconclusive. Some children do significantly better, while others do not.



One concern about the practice is that some students are misdiagnosed as immature when they really have special needs that need to be addressed. "Red-shirting" will only delay their diagnosis and placement in the special education classes they need instead of another year in preschool.

If you are considering "red-shirting" your child, here are some things to consider:

- **Be clear about the reasons** you think your child should stay out of school for a year—lack of maturity, for example, or inability to concentrate for more than a few minutes. If your only worry is that your child has a summer birthday, don't hold him back.
- **Talk with the school.** A kindergarten screening test might give you an idea of how your child would fare in a classroom.
- **Talk to your child's preschool teacher** about his readiness for kindergarten. Has he made friends in preschool? Could he usually follow directions? Does the preschool teacher think he's ready for academic work?
- **Consider what else** your child would be doing if he didn't start kindergarten. Would he have plenty of chances to play with other children? Could he go to a good preschool program?
- **Are there things you can do at home** to help your child reach the skill level required for kindergarten? Talk with the kindergarten teacher.

As the First Day Approaches

Register your child. Before your child can start school, he has to be registered. You will need to bring these things with you to register:

- **Proof of your child's age** (a birth certificate, passport or immigration certificate).
- **Proof of your identity** (a photo ID).
- **Your child's immunization record** (although different states may require different immunizations, you can check the latest recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics online at www.cispimmunize.org/).
- **Proof that you have custody** of your child if you are divorced.
- **Your child's Social Security** card.
- **Completed medical examination forms** from your child's doctor.
- **Proof that you live in the school district** is also required by most public schools. A driver's license, rental agreement or utility bill will usually suffice. If you plan to move but haven't yet, contact the school to find out what documents they will accept.

"Nurture your mind with great thoughts, for you will never go any higher than you think."

—Benjamin Disraeli

Also:

- **Attend orientation.** Most schools hold a kindergarten orientation. Be sure to attend—and bring your child if that's allowed. During the orientation, you and your child can see what the school looks like, visit the classroom, and perhaps even meet the teacher.
- **See if you can visit the school** with your child if your school does not hold a kindergarten orientation or if you moved into the community too late to attend. All these steps will go a long way to ease the questions and fears that your child may have.
- **Practice for the big day.** Even kids who have attended preschool are likely to get the jitters before their first day at "Big Kid School." So give your child a chance to practice. Set the alarm at the time your child will have to get up. Get in a routine—washing, dressing, eating breakfast, walking to school or the bus stop. All these will give you a chance to set a realistic schedule. They'll also give your child confidence when the first day arrives.
- **Don't stay too long.** Go with your child to school if possible. But don't stay too long. Reassure your child that he'll have a great day and then leave.
- **Be prepared to listen.** When your child comes home, he may seem overwhelmed. He may complain that school was too easy or too hard. Giving him a chance to talk will help him begin to make sense of this new experience.

Starting school is a big step. But by working with your child, you can make sure it's a step on the road to school success.

For More Information

"A Checklist for the First Day of School"

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.medem.com/medlb/article_detailb.cfm?
article_ID=ZZZ7DV4UBAC&sub_cat=18

Kindergarten Isn't What It Used to Be

by Susan Golant and Mitch Golant
Lowell House Publishing
1-800-323-4900
www.mcgraw-hill.com

"Kindergarten Readiness Checklist"

by Peggy Gisler and Marge Eberts
FamilyEducation.com
[http://familyeducation.com/article/
0,1120,21-14779-1,00.html](http://familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,21-14779-1,00.html)

The Parent Institute

1-800-477-8925
www.parent-institute.com

"Parent Involvement and Early Literacy"

by Qiuyun Lin
FINE Letter
October 2003
Harvard Family Research Project
[www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/
resources/digest/literacy.html](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/digest/literacy.html)

"Polk County Kindergarten Readiness Checklist"

Polk County [Florida] Public Schools
www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/prek/readiness.htm

Ready Start School

by Sandra F. Rief
Prentice Hall
1-800-848-9500
www.prenticehall.com

"Self-Regulation and School Readiness"

by Clancy Blair
ERIC Digest ED477640
www.ericfacili-
ty.net/databases/ERIC_Digest/ed477640.ht
ml

What Your Kindergartner Needs to Know

by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
Dell Publishing
1-800-733-3000
www.randomhouse.com

Other Parent Guides Available From The Parent Institute®

Family & Home Set

10 Great Ways to Teach Children Responsibility
25 Ways You Can Put the Power of Routines to Work for You and Your Child
52 Great Ways Families Can Spend Time Together

School Readiness—Set 1

Developmental Milestones for Preschool Children—Is My Child on Track?
Preparing Your Child for Reading Success—Birth to Age Five
How to Choose the Best Preschool or Day Care for Your Child

School Readiness—Set 2

Common Discipline Problems of Preschoolers and How to Deal With Them
37 Experiences Every Child Should Have Before Starting School
Getting Your Child Ready for Kindergarten

School Success—Set 1

The Road to Reading Success—Elementary School Years
Common Discipline Problems of Elementary School Children and How to Solve Them
31 Alternatives to TV and Video Games for Your Elementary School Child

School Success—Set 2

Give Your Child the Edge: Teachers' Top 10 Learning Secrets Parents Can Use
How to Help Children Do Their Best on Tests
Helping Children Get Organized for Homework and Schoolwork

School Success—Set 3

Help Your Child Develop Good Learning Styles
How to Instill the Character Traits of Success in Your Child
Seven Proven Ways to Motivate Children to Do Better in School

When There is a Problem—Set 1

Help Your Child Deal With Bullies and Bullying
Help Your Child Deal With Peer Pressure
How to Help Your Struggling Student

Other Important Titles

Common Discipline Problems of Teenagers and How to Solve Them
What to Do If Your Child Has ADD/ADHD
Common Discipline Problems of Middle School Children and How to Solve Them
Making a Smooth Transition to Middle School

*For more information about these and other materials for
parents to encourage learning in their children:*

1-800-756-5525
www.parent-institute.com

