

Teaching School Readiness Skills to Preschool-Aged Children



This toolkit provides guidance and strategies for developing preschoolers' school readiness skills and is designed to help caregivers and developmental therapists better understand early learning skills important for preschoolers approaching kindergarten. Strategies to build and strengthen these skills are provided with neurodiversity in mind. A more detailed review of this material and additional resources can be found in the interactive online course. Learn more at triad.vkclearning.org/en-us/Toolkits.

➤ Classroom Participation Skills

What are classroom participation skills?

Classroom participation skills help your child take an active role in their learning. By encouraging these skills, we can allow them to “show what they know” in an expected way. Preschool-aged children can be engaged in learning through environments that make them feel safe and valued. Classroom participation skills involve actively engaging with peers, teachers, and classroom materials. These are the skills that may first come to mind when you think about classroom readiness.

Skills Include:

- ☐ Waiting your turn
- ☐ Standing in line
- ☐ Raising hand
- ☐ Listening to/following directions
- ☐ Putting materials away

Helping your child know what to expect, and what is expected of them, can help them get ready to learn in the classroom setting. There are many different and fun ways to introduce classroom participation skills to your child. Let's take a closer look at strategies to teach and encourage these skills with your child.

Strategies to Encourage Skills	
	Provide a visual depiction of expectations.
	Read books with your child about going to school, classroom expectations, etc.
	Role play a classroom routine, such as lining up, circle time, or taking turns with others. You can use dolls, stuffed animals, or other toys to act as students. Have your child practice expected behaviors. You can even take turns being the “teacher” and “student”!
	Use opportunities for practice in the community, such as waiting in line at the store, playing at the playground, or attending reading time at your local library. <i>Tip: While you are playing, help your child make associations between expected classroom behaviors and desired outcomes. For example, show how students who have their hands raised get to share their answer, those who wait their turn get to play with the toy, those who stand in line get to go to the playground, etc.</i>
	Give specific, frequent praise when your child listens to your instruction and follows directions (e.g., “You put your shoes on right after I asked! Excellent job!”)
	Use picture naming and rhyming in games like the “Simon Says” to encourage listening skills. You can use alliteration to teach careful listening (e.g., noticing that “book, bag, and ball” all start with the ‘b’ sound).

➤ Social and Personal Engagement Skills

What are social and personal engagement skills?

For preschoolers, social engagement is the foundation of learning. Strong social skills and emotional awareness create an environment where they can feel safe, valued, heard, and part of the whole group. These skills encourage positive interactions and help preschoolers be ready to learn and stay engaged throughout their school day.

Skills Include:

- ❑ Taking turns and sharing: Waiting their turn or offering a toy to another child who wants to play
- ❑ Asking for help: Identifying who they can approach when they need help, and how to ask for it
- ❑ Emotion identification/awareness: Recognizing your own emotions and talking about them with others
- ❑ Self-regulation: How to calm your body down when feeling a strong emotion
- ❑ Winning and losing games: Responding to the outcome of games in an expected way

Strategies to Teach Social Engagement Skills	
	Work on identifying basic emotions (e.g., happy, sad, angry) in self and others. <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Provide pictures of emotions.» Pause favorite shows or movies to point out what emotions the characters are feeling.
	Talk about how to calm down when frustrated. <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Help your child take deep breaths from their belly, in through the nose and out through the mouth» Point out when you are upset and need to calm yourself down. Modeling these skills can be very helpful!
	Give your child scripts on how to ask for help. <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Provide them with visual aids, phrases (“Help, please” or “Can you help me, please?”), or sentence stems (“I need help to ____”) they can use to request.» Encourage a growth mindset with the word “Yet” (“I can’t do this yet, can you show me?”).
	Role play situations where your child may have to share an item, lose a game, or wait their turn to play. <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Guide your child through interactions in the community with other children, such as at the park or at your local library.» Use positive language to help them understand what they should be doing, instead of simply stating what they should not be doing.» Prompt calm down strategies when they become upset.

➤ Early Literacy Skills

Foundational Literacy Skills

Building a solid foundation of literacy skills is important in helping your child become a strong reader. For very young children, it can be difficult to know where to begin in teaching these skills. Skills such as engaging with books, recognizing familiar stories, and connecting books to personal experiences create a foundation for literacy skills in preschool and kindergarten.

Strategies to Grow Foundational Reading Skills

Make books fun.

- » Create unique voices for different characters in the book.
- » Relate stories to your child's personal experiences (e.g., He has a brother just like you! They went to the beach like us!).
- » If your child is familiar with the story, ask them to fill in the missing words. Point to the word as they are saying it.

Read with your child at least once a week.

- » Visit your local library to check out different books or attend story time for children.
- » Look up Imagination Library.
The Imagination Library also offers books in different languages and formats (e.g., braille, Spanish).

Emerging Literacy Skills

As your child begins to master their foundational reading skills, they may be ready to try more advanced skills. Once preschoolers recognize that books can be fun and tell stories that are similar to their own lives, they can begin to work on emerging reading skills. These include recognizing letters, letter sounds, and sight words, as well as understanding that the printed text is what tells the story (instead of just the pictures). While flashcards and workbooks can be useful in teaching letter sounds, it can be helpful to give your child more engaging activities to grow these skills.

Ways to Teach Emerging Reading Skills

Build on skills during normal reading time.

- » Point to words as you read aloud to your child, emphasizing beginning and ending letter sounds.

Learn through games and songs.

Bring words to life.

- » Point out print your child may see during everyday activities, such as road signs, menu items, and labels around the home.

➤ Early Numeracy Skills

Foundational Numeracy Skills

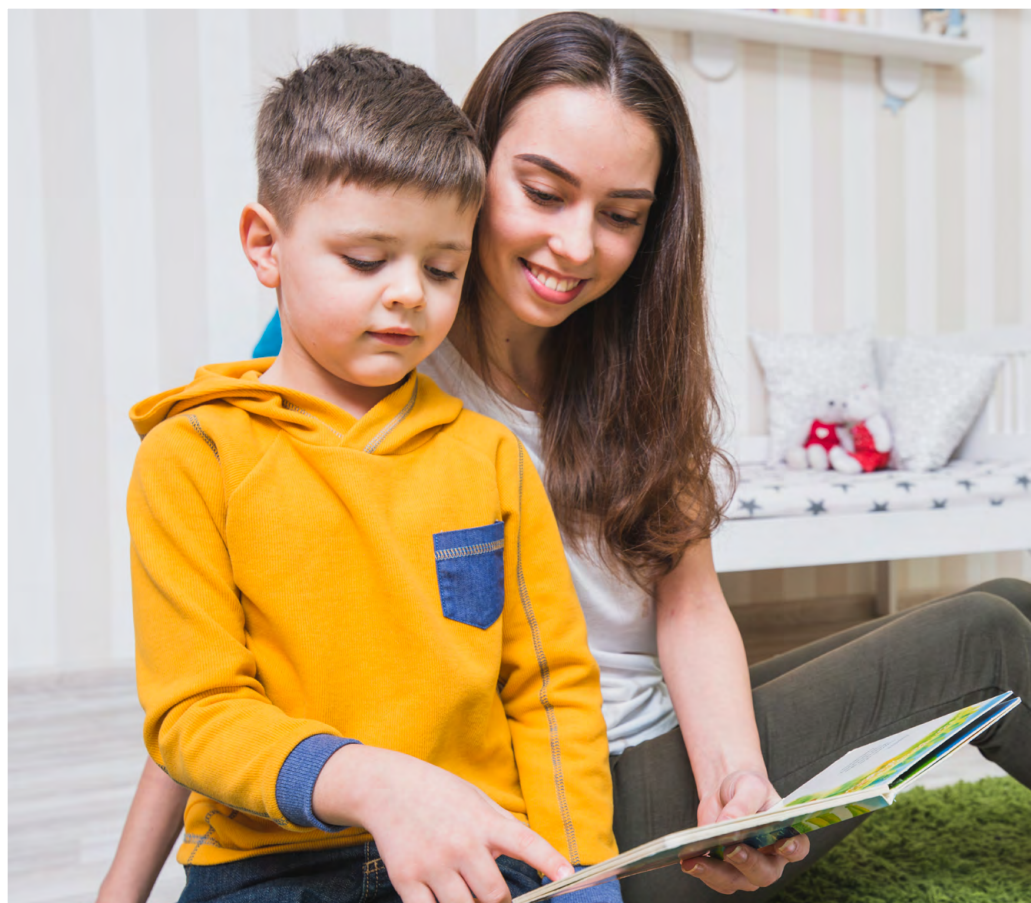
Teaching your child numeracy skills may feel like a big and overwhelming task. If you are looking for a way to start teaching foundational numeracy skills to support your child’s learning in preschool and kindergarten, there are several great places to begin!

How to Build Foundational Numeracy Skills	
	Point out numbers that are around your child each day or use daily tasks to teach numbers and relationships. » Count items in a group. » Compare groups of items (e.g., “more” or “less”, “bigger” or “smaller”).
	Practice number recognition in writing.
	Use puzzles and shape sorters to strengthen visual skills.
	Help your child count from 1 to 10. » Sing/play songs that include counting.

Emerging Numeracy Skills

As your child shows mastery of foundational numeracy skills, you may have questions about what to teach next. Once preschoolers show strong abilities to count and compare items, recognize printed numbers, and count from 1 to 10 in order, you can shift your focus to emerging numeracy skills. Emerging skills in this area include sorting objects by their appearance (like color, size, and shape), understanding how objects are positioned in relation to other objects (like under, behind, and next to), and understanding that the last counting word refers to ‘how many’ of something they have. You may find that these skills are easy to start adding to the activities you have already done with your child, because they build off skills your child already has!

Building Emerging Numeracy Skills	
	Sort and classify objects by color/size/shape/etc.
	Understand that the last counting word means ‘how many’ there are.
	Identify object positions, such as “under,” “behind,” and “next to.”
	Copy and create patterns with shapes, colors, etc.
	Begin exploring simple graphs. » Example: Have your child put their picture next to a favorite treat in a graph. Have them choose their favorite ice cream and vote by putting a sticker on the graph.



These foundational strategies build off things you are already doing with your child and provide fun and engaging opportunities to learn. Being intentional about how you play with your preschooler can help set them up for success as they approach kindergarten.

➤ Resources

- ❑ Imagination Library
imaginationlibrary.com
- ❑ National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
naeyc.org/resources
naeyc.org/resources/blog/creating-playful-literacy-rich-preschool-environment
- ❑ Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards (TN-ELDS)
tn.gov/education/districts/academic-standards/early-learning-development-standards.html

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- Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards (TN-ELDS) <https://www.tn.gov/education/districts/academic-standards/early-learning-development-standards.html>

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