

One year old . . .

- By age one, toddlers are curious and mobile. Allow as much freedom to explore as you safely can.
- One-year-olds are ready to express their creativity. Try fingerpaints (in the bathtub to contain the mess). Boxes of various sizes are fun.
- Children can start learning the basics of self-care. Help your child wash and dry his own hands.
- Start reading aloud to the child regularly. Find books with lots of pictures.

Two years old . . .

- A two-year-old is ready for jumbo crayons, a pair of blunt scissors, and a stack of paper (much better than a coloring book).
- Verbal communication becomes more and more important. Talk to the child, ask questions, tell him what things are, give verbal directions.
- Introduce the idea of left and right, up and down, and other simple directions.

Three years old . . .

- Be sure your child is having regular contact with other children and adults. Set up play groups, if necessary. Explain who people are who come to your house and why they are there: your friends, the mail carrier, delivery and service people.
- Help your child make picture stories using pictures from magazines or old books.
- Play counting games — and always count objects. Don't just name the numbers, which have no meaning to the child yet.
- Play games that require eye-body coordination, such as ring-toss type games.

Four years old . . .

- Your child should be getting used to groups of people. If he or she has not been attending pre-school or play group, have him or her attend a church school or some other group activity.
- Take your child on frequent field trips — to the zoo, the park, a nature preserve, fire and police stations. Don't forget the library, as soon as the child is old enough for books.
- Teach your child his full name, address, telephone number, and the names of his parents. This may take a while . . . Be patient and go over the material regularly.
- Encourage any special interest your child may show in reading, writing, painting, making music, dancing, sports activities. Such early interests, if encouraged, can become rewarding hobbies, if not vocations, later in life.

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Your pre-school child . . .

**What to do
until it's time
for school**

When should my child start school?



The "right" time varies from child to child.

The answer is as individual as the child. Every child develops at a different rate, so that some seem to benefit from pre-school starting in their earliest years . . . While others aren't ready for school until they're five, six, or even older.

How can I tell when my child is ready to start?

By knowing your child. If you have doubts, consult with a specialist. The principal of the school your child will attend can advise you, or can suggest a teacher or school psychologist for you to talk with.

As a general guideline, a child who is ready to start school has developed certain personal and social skills and is mature enough to cope with new people and new experiences. Specifically, the child who is ready to start school should be able to:

- Dress himself or herself, including tying shoes and buttoning coats.
- Handle bathroom functions without help, and use and dispose of tissues properly.
- Remember his or her full name, address, telephone number, and parents' names.
- Speak in full sentences without using baby talk.
- Understand and respect the difference between his own property and other people's.

How can I help my child be ready for school when the time comes?

At each stage of development, there are things you can do to help your child develop fully and naturally. In general, it is important to remember that all children have the same basic needs for:

Acceptance:

Children need unconditional love and acceptance if they are to gain self-assurance. This doesn't mean you shouldn't correct or discipline your child — but make it clear to the child that his or her behavior is unacceptable. Never imply that the child is unacceptable.

Tolerance:

Children grow and learn through their mistakes — just as adults do. If mistakes are treated as a normal part of the learning process, and not something to be ashamed of or embarrassed about, your child is more likely to become an adult who meets life fearlessly and is not afraid to take chances.

Stimulation:

Even very young children need contact with other people and new experiences.

Health:

Make sure your child eats an adequate diet emphasizing simple, natural foods. Try to start the breakfast habit early — children who eat breakfast do better in school than those who don't. Encourage physical activity. Make sure the child gets plenty of sleep (some doctors recommend 12 hours up to the age of nine.) Regular medical care is important.

Following are a number of specific ways you can help your child be ready for school when the time comes.

Keep in mind:

- * These activities are only general guidelines.
- * Each child develops at his or her own pace, and it's important for parents to accept the child as an individual.
- * Children should be encouraged, but not pushed to proceed to the next stage of their development, and should never be made to feel they have "failed" if they can't master a skill. (If you are afraid your child is not developing as quickly as s/he should, check with a pediatrician.

From the beginning . . .

- Praise can't start too young. Praise your child for doing something well — sitting up, crawling, stacking blocks.
- If an infant doesn't seem to move much, encourage him/her. Gently move legs and arms and turn the child from one side to the other.
- Start building physical coordination by playing games that involve clapping hands or similar movements.
- From the child's very first toys, choose playthings that will encourage your child's natural curiosity and creativity. During the first year, this means toys that are interesting to look at, listen to, and handle. Mobiles that hang over the crib just barely in reach are an excellent choice for infants. Later, blocks and other "building" toys are good.

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