



Helping children, youth and families thrive

Welcome to Kindergarten



Starting school is an important step in your child's development.

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Starting school can be exciting and scary for parents and children: Tips to help with the transition.

- Visit the school before they start.
- Label everything (on the inside) that your child will be taking with them to school.
- Arrive on time (or early).
- Pick out clothing, pack lunches and bags the night before.
- Practice opening snack and lunch containers with them before they take them to school.
- Pack multiple healthy snacks as opposed to one big lunch.
- Get a good night's sleep before going to school.
- Help your child to deal with upsets and disappointments.
- Talk about your own positive school experience.
- Help your child to eat a healthy breakfast before heading out.

Setting routines

Creating good routines helps to create predictability and security for your child. It also allows them to develop independence, helps develop self-esteem and lessens the stress on caregivers.

Morning Routines

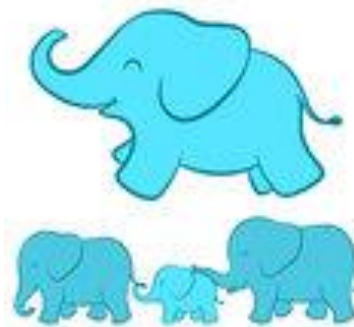
- Ensure everyone has enough sleep.
- Prepare the night before, pack lunches, pick clothes, bathe, etc.
- Have a space for school bags.
- Avoid screens.
- Praise cooperation.
- Add in time for a story or extra time together *after* all tasks are complete.

Mealtimes

- Eat meals together.
- Create expectations for behaviour at mealtimes.
- Whenever possible, sit at a table and stay with your child.

Bedtime Routine

- Children 2-5 require 11-13 hours of sleep (including naps).
- Pick a consistent bedtime.
- Divide the routine into three parts, hygiene, preparing for tomorrow and time together.
- Allow for enough time for the routine to avoid rushing your child.
- Turn off all electronics at least 1.5 hours before bed.
- Create special bedtime rituals such as special ways to say goodnight and I love you.



Remember to praise your child when they do well and ignore minor misbehaviour.

What about screen time?



What *are* the recommended amounts of screen time for children?

Read more on page 3.



“Children learn as they play. Most importantly, in play children learn how to learn.” O. Fred Donaldson

Saying good-bye is hard

It's normal for children to experience some fear and anxiety in new and unfamiliar situations. Any fears your child displays about going to school are normal and should disappear in a week or two. Kindergarten teachers are trained and will support you and your child through this period of separation.

What your child is experiencing isn't really a fear of school but

anxiety over separation from you. Stomach aches, headaches or nausea can be symptoms of anxiety.

Reassure your child that he/she will be ok at school through praise and encouragement. A positive experience at school will reduce the anxiety. Avoiding school by staying home can lead to an increase in anxiety and symptoms.

Reducing the anxiety, things you can do

- Take your child to his/ her new school before they are scheduled to begin. Whether your child is entering pre-school or elementary school they need to get familiar with the building and, if possible, their new teacher.
- Read stories to your child about going to school.
- Encourage your child to develop habits that will help them at school, for example: dressing self, learning to listen, getting along with others and putting things away.
- Talk with your child about the positive memories you have about school. If you were fearful too, tell your child how quickly that feeling went away.
- Make sure your child sees all the big kids going off each day, especially when they are laughing and having fun together.
- Make sure your child gets lots of sleep to have lots of energy for school. Discuss any fears before the first day. Reassure your child that everything will be okay.
- Talk positively about what your child may be doing at school – story time, learning letters and numbers, playing games and making new friends.
- When dropping off your children at school, say goodbye, tell your child you are leaving and when you will be back and try not to linger.

THE BENEFITS OF PLAYDOUGH

Playdough helps to develop and strengthen the small muscles used for printing, cutting and other fine motor tasks. Making playdough can help to develop pre-math and pre-literacy skills. But playdough can be very messy, which makes parents want to avoid using it. Set up a playdough area by using a plastic tablecloth or a large garbage bag to contain the mess and avoid accidents. Establish a rule that the playdough must remain in the playdough area and have fun rolling, squishing and cutting out shapes, cookies, cakes and animals!

Homemade Playdough

- 2 1/2 cups water
 - 1 1/4 c. salt
 - 5 tbsp. vegetable oil
 - 2 1/2 cups flour
 - Food coloring or liquid watercolors
1. Add the food colouring to the water
 2. Mix everything together in a large bowl
 3. Knead until smooth.

Glitter, spices and essential oils can also be added to playdough for a different experience. When you are finished using your playdough it can be stored in a large plastic storage bag or a sealed container.



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No Bake Craft Clay

- 1 cup cornstarch
 - 1 1/4 cups cold water
 - 2 cups baking soda
 - Paint (optional)
1. Mix all ingredients except paint in saucepan over medium heat for 4 minutes until thick (like mashed potatoes).
 2. Remove from heat, turn out onto a plate and cover with a damp cloth until cool.
 3. Knead like dough.
 4. Use cookie cutters or shape and mold into your creations.
 5. Store in airtight container to dry overnight.
 6. Paint your creations.

Craft Clay can be used to make long-lasting decorations or other creations. They can be kept or given to family and friends for keepsakes and gifts.

What about screen time?

Screens are everywhere and sometimes seems like the only way a parent gets a chance to breathe, but what's the impact?

In November 2017, the Canadian Pediatric Society released its new guidelines on recommended screen time for children. Screen time includes any time spent watching T.V., using a computer, tablet, cell phone, or video game console.

In the Canadian Pediatric Society's position statement, they identified possible impacts that screen time can have on children's development. They did acknowledge that it is unknown what impacts exposure had on the developing brain, but that the amount children under 5 learn from screens is very limited. There are possibly links between excessive early screen exposure and an increase in language delays. Even background TV has negative impact on children's ability to learn new language, pay attention, executive function skills and their cognitive development. They did not find any benefits to exposing infants and toddlers to screens.

What the Canadian Pediatric Society recommends for screen time is that children under 2 receive no screen time at all. Children from 2-5 have a one-hour daily maximum and children 5 and over a two-hour daily maximum.

They further recommend the 4M's for screen time:

- *Minimize* the amount of time. Maintain screen-free times during the day and limit the amount of time that any member of the family spends on screens.
- *Mitigate* (reduce) the risks associated with screen time. Make sure that you are watching with your child to ensure that content is appropriate and to discuss later.
- Be *Mindful* how much time the family is using screens and set limits for your children and yourself.
- *Model* healthy screen use and show them alternative ways to occupy their time.

www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/screen-time-and-young-children



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What's for lunch?

School may be the first time your child eats away from home. What and how do you pack to keep their energy up for the day?

Packing lunches can be the most stressful part of your day, what if they don't eat? What if they don't have enough? What if ...? Remember, you know your child best and you know what their favourite foods are. When they first start a new school is not the best time to introduce new foods. Children are more likely to eat something when they know what it is. Allow your child to help in the preparation of their lunch and snacks. For some children, many small snacks will be better than a large lunch. This allows for a variety of choices and snacks can be eaten in shorter amounts of time.

To prepare for lunch at school:

- Ask how long your child has to eat and how many opportunities are there throughout the day for them to eat. Different classes and different schools have different expectations.
- Ask what assistance is available: can lunches be heated? Are lunches refrigerated?
- Take your child to the store to buy containers, water bottles and lunch bags to ensure that they can open them. A jar that keeps food hot or cold is great for sending leftovers.

Lunch and Snack ideas

- Cut-up vegetables (carrots, celery cucumber etc.)
- Fruit
- Cheese & Crackers
- Rice or noodles
- Yogurt
- Breakfast cereal
- Popcorn
- Muffins
- Bread sticks
- Wraps or sandwiches
- Salad
- Pita & Humus
- Roti
- Bagel

Lunches and snacks should always be nut free. Some schools have other restrictions. Check with your child's school to be sure.

Cheese and Carrot Sandwiches

(Toronto Public Health)

Prep time 10 minutes

Ingredients

1/2 cup shredded carrots
1/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1 tbsp mayonnaise
1/4 tsp pepper
8 slices whole grain bread

Directions

1. In a medium bowl combine carrots, cheese and mayonnaise and mix. Add pepper to taste.
2. Spread cheese mixture on one slice of bread and top with another slice.
3. Use cookie cutters to cut into different shapes.



Children's stomachs are the same size as their fist. Keep this in mind when offering food.

A guide to development at 3 ½ years old

GROSS MOTOR

- Run 50 feet in under 10 seconds
- Climb on jungle gym and other equipment
- Kick a ball
- Alternate feet going upstairs
- With handheld, jump from height of 8"
- Stand on one foot with momentary balance - use pedals to ride tricycle and avoid obstacles
- Throw a small ball
- Walk along a straight line for 1-2'
- Walk backwards and sideways

With help may:

- do standing broad jump of 12"
- jump off ground with two-footed jump
- alternate feet going downstairs
- hop on one foot for a few steps
- catch a large ball with arms extended
- skip six times imitating another person

FINE MOTOR

- Copy a circle from a drawing
- Build a tower of 9 blocks
- Place round, square and triangular block
- Complete easy 4-piece puzzle
- Copy bridge of blocks from model

With help may:

- pull on shoes but not tie laces
- handle scissors and cut out shapes
- copy a symbol in a board form
- pull up zipper, but not do buttoning
- carry liquids in a cup, screw lid on jar

COGNITIVE

- Sort objects by colour and size
- Classify objects by purpose (toys, clothes)
- Name one or more colours
- Count to 3 objects
- Say name and parts of address
- Understand time intervals better
- Differentiate between boys and girls

With help may:

- count to 10 and understand number concepts to 3
- use increasing numbers of pronouns and prepositions with understanding
- show sense of humour
- understand "It's time to..."

LANGUAGE

- Use vocabulary of about 900 words
- Use language to get what he/she wants
- Use language to express feelings
- Respond to simple instructions
- Use plurals and personal pronouns *I, you, me*
- Repeat 3 numbers
- Use 5-word sentences
- Repeat a few rhymes and songs
- Name familiar objects in picture book

With help may:

- ask *what, where, who* questions
- use parts of speech correctly
- play with words in silly rhymes
- use new and unfamiliar words

SOCIAL

- Join in associative play with group
- Show empathy if not overwhelmed
- Complete toilet training
- Enjoy being in a play group

With help may:

- share toys
- cooperate in putting toys away
- take turns

EMOTIONAL

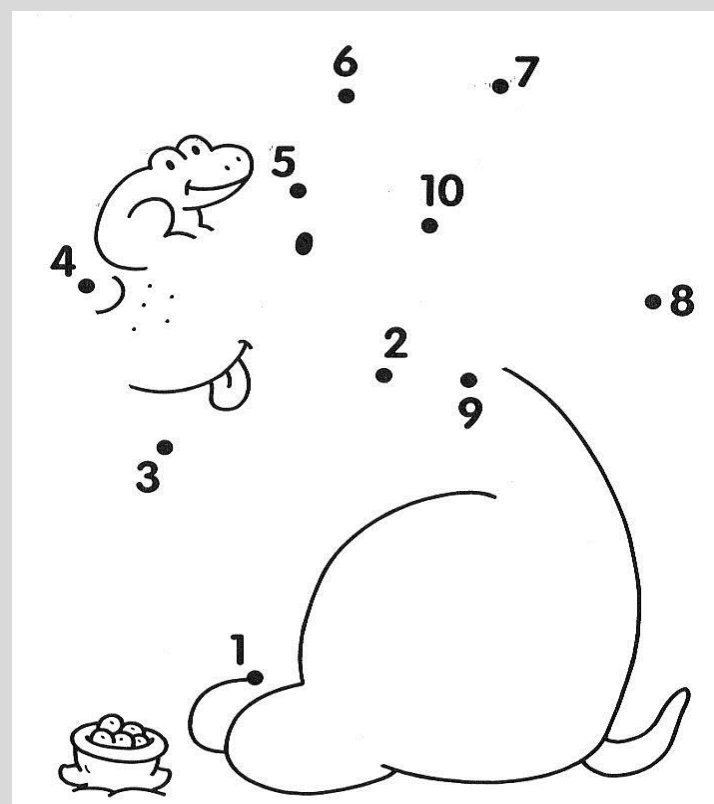
- See things from another's perspective
- Understand cause and effect
- Control aggression and tantrums (partly)
- Be less upset by limits and discipline
- Have increased compliance
- Settle after nightmares more easily
- Sleep through the night

With help may:

- cooperate with dressing and undressing
- more even tempered and cooperative with parents
- keep room and toys in order
- grow in independence and self-esteem
- expand pretend play into rich, connected themes
- play out adult roles in imaginary play



1. Build a fort. Gather boxes, cushions and or blankets and create a space to escape to read or let your imagination run wild.
2. Create an outdoor masterpiece. Secure a large piece of paper or old fabric to a fence or wall. Use paint, chalk, crayons and whatever else you can find to create your masterpiece.
3. Visit your local library and join the summer reading club.
4. Have a picnic lunch at a local park.
5. Blow bubbles. Children love bubbles and they are a great way to encourage language, turn taking and waiting.
6. Make instruments, toilet paper rolls, tape and rice make great shakers. Plastic containers or pots for drums, and an elastic band around a Kleenex box for a guitar to form a junk yard band.
7. Grow something. Egg cartons make great planters for small plants or grass seed.
8. Read a book and draw a picture about your favourite part.



"A person's a person, no matter how small" Dr. Seuss

Please visit stridestoronto.ca for more information.