

# Start Kindergarten Ready

It's important for kids starting kindergarten in a few months to feel confident and ready on their first day of school. Mastering kindergarten readiness skills is one way to do that. Kindergarten readiness includes practical skills that children need to succeed, as well as social emotional skills that help them to successfully function in a classroom of peers. And parents play a key role in preparing kids for that first day. Try these tips:

**Talk Together** – Children need both confidence and ability to use their words:

- Have frequent conversations with your children and encourage them to use words to express their feelings and reactions to the world around them.
- Read to your children for 20 minutes every day and talk about the story, the characters and what happened first, next and last.
- Stories and songs with rhyming words expose children to different sounds and help build their vocabulary.

**Sharing** – Sharing is hard for preschoolers, but a necessary skill in kindergarten:

- Parents can teach cooperative play, like completing puzzles or building a block tower together.
- As you're building the block tower, walk through the concept of sharing by saying, "Now it's your turn to add a block and then it will be my turn."
- Use positive reinforcement to encourage sharing. When you see your child sharing with someone else, point it out.

**Counting** – Children entering kindergarten can typically count to 10:

- Teach your child to count by using objects like blocks, buttons, or books.
- Make counting part of your daily routine. Ask your child to count the number of plates needed for dinner or how many steps you're climbing.

**My Name** – Children are expected to be able to print their first name:

- When children are toddlers, you can start pointing out the first letter of their name whenever you see it. You can also play word games by saying, "Your name starts with 'T' like tiger. What else starts with that letter?"
- Children can practice writing their name with their finger to get the feel of the letters. Try spreading shaving cream on a cookie sheet for practice.
- Teach your child the proper pincer grip, which is needed for holding a pencil, by asking your child to pick up Cheerios or small objects with his or her thumb and index finger.
- Playing with play dough can also help develop hand muscles needed for writing or cutting.

**Listening** – Teachers expect children to be able to follow directions and listen:

- Improve listening skills by encouraging your child to repeat directions back to you.
- Use multi-step directions to build your child's attention span, such as "Please pick up your toys first, and then grab your coat."
- Try playing games that require listening and following directions, such as Simon Says or Red Light, Green Light.

Adapted from original post on [July 24, 2013](#) by [First 5 Contra Costa](#)