

Top Tips for School Readiness

In order to be ready to learn, it is important that children have certain basic skills before they start school. There are many ways in which parents, carers and other family members can help children acquire these skills. These Top Tips can help you to make sure children have the skills they need to start school as confident, happy individuals ready to learn and achieve.

To sit still and to listen – for example during Assembly or at story time

- Introduce times during the day when your child can do this with you at home
- Sit together to share books, stories and rhymes
- Provide opportunities for your child to both speak and to listen
- Share meal times together sitting at a table

To speak to an adult to ask for needs.

- Encourage your child to make simple choices for example ‘Do you want the red cup or the blue cup?’
- Listen to your child’s ideas and value their opinions
- Remember to give lots of praise and encouragement
- Talk about how you are feeling and encourage your child to do the same. Remember that children learn positive language and behaviour from you
- Encourage your child to let you know what they want or need by talking directly to you

To talk in sentences.

- Talking aloud helps children to think through the process. Model being a thinker and talk through your actions too, for example “This puzzle piece will fit here”
- Give your child time to talk and think. Allow your child thinking time without jumping in and speaking for them
- Help your child to think by asking questions that require a response, for example “where do you think we should put this?”
- Talk to your child about previous activities, use photographs at home to talk about past events
- Share books, stories and rhymes together. Talk about what is happening in the story and think up different endings together
- Encourage children to share ideas and goals and to talk about what they are doing and why
- Build your child’s vocabulary by using different words. Try using a new word every day and aim to use it at least 10 times when speaking to your child

To be potty trained and able to use the toilet.

- Encourage your child to use the toilet independently at home
- When buying clothes consider the fastenings that may be easier for your child to manage, for example Velcro shoes and elasticated trousers
- Use visual pictures in your toilet at home showing the sequence of events when using the toilet, for example toilet, flush, wash hands
- Speak to your health visitor if you have any concerns about toilet training

To recognise their own name.

- Make a name card for your child and other members of the family. Use them for meal times and ask everyone to find their name before sitting down.
- Use the name cards with a post box (you can make one from a cereal box) encourage your child to play a posting game; find Mummy, post mummy, find Sarah, and post Sarah etc.
- Ask your child to 'write' their own card copying from the name card you have done. At first it may just look like marks, but you will be amazed how quickly your child will begin to form recognisable letters
- Point out letters in the environment that begin with your child's name
- Hide letters around the house and encourage your child to find them. Ask your child to try and put them into the correct order to make their name
- Remember that children learn through repetition and through play

To be aware of other children

- Provide opportunities for your child to play with other children of a similar age
- If conflicts occur encourage your child to tell you how they are feeling and to explain why they are upset
- Encourage your child to take turns. Using a sand timer (1minute) is a good way of helping your child to understand that the toy will be returned to them
- Play board games (or turn taking games) together
- Expose your child to lots of different social situations, for example by using local parks, play groups and children's centres

To be independent and try to do things for themselves.

- Encourage your child to take off their own coat, put on their shoes and take them off again. Make time for your child to be able to do this on their own without help from you
- Encourage your child to use a knife, fork and spoon and to feed themselves
- Prepare family meals together

To understand the word 'No' and the borders it sets for behaviour

- It is important for your child to understand that some actions have a consequence
- Set clear and consistent boundaries for your child
- Help your child to understand socially acceptable behaviour. Take your child to different social groups where they can learn and develop their personal and social skills, for example children's centres and play groups
- Give your child clear and simple instruction, for example "first we go shopping and then we go to the park"
- Praise your child and explain why you are pleased with them, for example, "well done you have helped me tidy away all the toys today"

To understand the word 'Stop' and that this might be used to prevent danger.

- Play games with your child that involves following simple instructions, for example the traffic light game; red stop, yellow get ready, green go!
- Play ready, steady go, developing your child's understanding of having to wait
- Teach your child: Stop Look Listen!