

Coming to School-Getting ready ...



Social and emotional skills

Teach friendship skills: Teach your child ways to introduce themselves to new children, join in play with others and be friendly and co-operative. Talk to your child about what being a good friend means (eg sharing, taking turns at choosing a play activity, using kind words).

Encourage sharing and taking turns: Playing with your child, following their lead and having fun together will help develop their social skills. Playing simple board games, card games or computer games with children helps them to develop sharing and turn taking skills. It also helps children to cope with disappointment when they do not always win.

Invite children to play together: Arranging for your child to get together with other children helps them to establish friendships and practice their social skills. Providing positive guidance and helping to structure activities (eg using blocks to build a tower together) can be helpful when supporting children to establish new friendships.

Involve your child in conversations: Talking with your child and involving them in conversations can help them to learn the rules of communication such as waiting for a turn, expressing ideas and listening without interrupting.

Help your child to manage their emotions: Emotional skills include being able to recognize, express, understand and manage a wide range of feelings. You can promote your child's emotional development by spending time with them and being warm and responsive to their needs. Talk to your child about what is happening and help them to describe and label the emotions they are feeling.

Get to know other families in the school community: Arranging to meet with other families in the school community prior to starting school will help develop relationships and a sense of connectedness to the school community.

Independence skills

Encourage self-help skills: These skills include dressing and undressing, eating from their lunch box, opening their drink bottle, going to the toilet and asking for help. Encouraging your child to develop these skills will give them lots of confidence in being able to do things for themselves.

Promote a sense of responsibility: Encouraging your child to take responsibility for small tasks (eg setting the table for dinner, putting their clothes in the wash basket) will help them feel useful and build their self-confidence.

Teach your children to care for their belongings: Encourage your child to care for and respect their belongings (eg tidying up toys, putting pencils back in their pencil case).

Develop your child's understanding of social rules: Talk to your child about how different settings have different rules and expectations (eg rules at preschool, rules around a swimming pool to keep everyone safe). This will help them adjust to some new rules they will need to learn to remember and follow at school.

Introduce early literacy and numeracy skills: These include your child recognizing numbers and letters, and counting and writing their own name. Introduce the concept of counting and letter recognition through everyday activities. For example, count the number of toys on the floor, point to words when reading aloud to your child, sing songs, say nursery rhymes and foster an enjoyment of listening to stories. Remember, children will get plenty of practice with reading and writing once they start school.

Encourage your child to focus on an activity: Encourage your child to sit and focus on an activity for a period of time (eg making a house from blocks, building a racing track, drawing a picture, doing a puzzle). Your child may benefit from you sitting with them or checking back at regular intervals to provide positive encouragement and feedback as they concentrate and enjoy themselves. For example, you might say, "wow, look at the size of the house you built! Could we add a fence or garden?"

Encourage listening skills: Reading books or listening to CD or DVD recordings of stories is a great way to help develop your child's listening skills. Asking questions about the story can also support your child's understanding and communication skills. For example, ask questions about what has happened, what might happen next or how characters might be feeling. To promote curiosity, you might ask, "I wonder what would happen if...?"

Help your child to follow instructions: Start by giving your child one instruction to follow (eg get your socks) and walk with them to do it if necessary. You can then build up to giving your child two-step instructions (eg put your dish in the sink and get your socks). Children often have difficulty remembering more than two or three instructions at a time.