








Starting Kindergarten? Help Make It a Good Experience!



Starting kindergarten can be an anxious or an exciting experience for children. They enter an unfamiliar environment and spend time with strangers, but they also make new friends, meet new teachers, and learn new skills. Getting off to a good start is important! If kindergarten is a good experience, children tend to continue to do well in school. If kindergarten is a painful experience, children often have trouble in later years.

-  **Talk about the kindergarten program *before* the first day of school.**
Talk with your child about kindergarten before the big day. Find out what she thinks kindergarten will be like. Be prepared to answer her questions: What will the start of the day be like? What will the end of the day be like? Where will I eat lunch and play?
-  **Visit the kindergarten classroom in the spring.**
If possible, visit the classroom during the school term before she starts. Talk with the teacher and walk around inside the school. Visit the playground, the lunchroom, and the bathrooms. Seeing these places and people can help to ease some of the concerns your child might have.
-  **Let your child know it's OK to feel anxious.**
If your child is hesitant about starting kindergarten, let her know that you (or an older brother or sister or friend) felt the same way. Reassure her that she will get used to it very soon.
-  **Be sure your child is well rested and well fed.**
Kindergarten is usually more tiring for children than preschool was. Your child will be better able to meet the demands of kindergarten if he is well rested and has had a good breakfast. When children start school, regular bedtimes and mealtimes are more important than ever!
-  **Help your child develop a sense of responsibility.**
During the school years, you will want your child to begin taking responsibility for getting herself and her personal belongings to school on time. You will want her to complete her schoolwork and classroom jobs. You will also want her to let you know when she brings home important notes from school. As much as possible, let your child perform these important tasks for herself, starting in kindergarten. Doing so will help her feel capable and learn to be responsible.
-  **Take kindergarten seriously.**
Showing interest in your child's kindergarten experience lets him know that school is valuable. Ask him who he played with, what books he read, and what activities he took part in. Read the notes that come home from the teacher and school. Attend parent-teacher meetings and as many other school events as your schedule will allow. Your interest in your child's kindergarten experience sends an important message:
School is important!
-  **For related Web resources, see "Starting Kindergarten? Help Make It a Good Experience!" at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.**



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