Stepping into Kindergarten

A School Readiness Guide for Families
Stepping Into Kindergarten!

Soon your child will start kindergarten. This guide will give you some ideas about what you can do during your child’s 4-year-old year to help assure your child is ready to “Step into Kindergarten.”

It will show you various ways you can lay the foundation for kindergarten, and it can connect you with school and community resources to help build your child’s kindergarten readiness skills.

Being ready for school is much more than knowing the alphabet and being able to count to 10. A ready child is healthy, curious about the world, interactive with others, and has a sense of self-control. You already do many things that help to prepare your child for success in school and help her to be ready for the first day of kindergarten.

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You are an important Part of the Picture

Good Communication Begins at Home

In kindergarten, children will talk with others throughout the day. They will need to use language to interact and solve problems. By talking with your child, you are building these skills.

Many children starting kindergarten interact with others by:
- Communicating their needs and wants.
- Describing different people, places, objects and events.
- Sharing something that happened during the day or the day before.
- Engaging in cooperative play.

When you have conversations, you are building communication skills:
- Ask questions about what happened at the park or on a visit with a friend.
- Ask about what happened first, next and last.
- Include details that describe objects to build language, math and science skills.

Routines Help Prepare Your Child to be Ready for School

Every family has routines that include sleeping, waking, eating meals, going to the market, doing the laundry or going to the library.

By following routines at home, your child will be prepared for the routines she will follow in kindergarten.

The routines that you follow at home will prepare your child to follow routines at school.

Can your child tell you what happens after breakfast?

Does she know when bedtime is?
Getting along with others is a skill that makes the transition to kindergarten easier for children.

- Play cooperatively and take turns.
- Share toys.
- Solve problems with words.
- Respect people and property.
- Ask for help.
- Greet others politely.
- Make friends.
- Talk about their feelings.

Getting Along with Others

Sleep
A well-rested child will be off to a good start each day.

Exercise
An active brain is ready to learn. Making regular physical activity a part of your family routine plays a role in getting your child ready for a day of learning. Meeting other families at the park gives your child a chance to play with friends. Playing on the elementary school playground will support an easy transition for your child as he will be comfortable there before school starts.

Good Nutrition
Eating healthy food is vital to growing minds and bodies. Allowing your child to make healthy snack and meal choices at home prepares her to make independent choices when she starts school. In kindergarten, your child can bring his own lunch from home or make his own choices in the cafeteria.
A Seasonal Calendar of School Readiness Experiences

In Virginia, children are eligible to attend kindergarten if their 5th birthday is on or before September 30. The following activities can be enjoyed together throughout the year before your child begins kindergarten.

**Fall**
- Visit the library regularly with your child. Help her choose books to read over and over. Share the stories by reading and retelling them.
- Encourage your child to choose a new food to try each week. Focus on colorful fruits and vegetables and interesting ways to prepare them.
- Take family walks together to look for signs of fall.
- Search for squirrels burying nuts, geese flying overhead, and leaves changing colors. Talk about the changes in the weather.
- Let your child experiment with markers, crayons and pencils to develop her writing skills. Frame her artwork, and hang it on the walls in your home.
- Teach your child to put on his own coat and practice buttoning and/or zipping.

**Winter**
- Use the Fairfax County Public Schools Boundary Information System at http://boundary.fcps.edu/boundary to determine where your child will attend kindergarten and visit that elementary school.
- Begin to gather the documents you need to register your child for kindergarten. These include: proof of residency; birth certificate; and health and immunization records. Registration procedures and forms are available at www.fcps.edu or you can pick up a registration packet at any Fairfax County elementary school.
- Plan to attend a kindergarten readiness workshop in your community.
- If you will need before and after school care, contact Fairfax County School Age Child Care. (FairfaxCounty.gov Search: SACC)
- Share simple tasks with your child that build math skills, like: sorting and matching the socks on laundry day, finding three red apples at the market, guessing which weighs more – a can of soup or a bag of rice.
- Bundle up and spend some family time outdoors. Talk about the changes your child sees in the environment. Look for trees that have lost their leaves and ones that are still green. Look for berries and pine cones.
- Find time everyday to share a book together. Talk with your child about favorite stories you have read.

Some great books for fall:
- "A is for Autumn" by Robert Maass
- "Leaf Man" by Lois Ehlert
- "It's Fall!!" by Linda Glaser
- "Sixteen Runaway Pumpkins" by Dianne Ochiltree
- "Dappled Apples" by Jan Carr
- "Turkey Trouble" by Wendi Silvano

Some great books for winter:
- "The Snowy Day" by Ezra Jack Keats
- "The First Day of Winter" by Denise Fleming
- "Snowy, Blowy, Winter" by Bob Raczka
- "Owl Moon" by Jane Yolen
- "Snowballs" by Lois Ehlert
- "Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes" by Eric Litwin
Spring

- Spring is a good time to start talking about kindergarten. Preschoolers may not have a strong understanding of time and how long it will be until they start school.
- Register early; complete all registration paperwork. Attend any kindergarten orientation programs that are scheduled at your neighborhood elementary school. Schedule a visit to the school with your child and ask to see several kindergarten rooms.
- As you read books with your child, emphasize words, begin to help your child notice words that rhyme or start with the same sound. Playing rhyming or sound games while traveling or walking helps pass the time while building early literacy skills.
- Look for the letters in your child’s name on signs around the neighborhood.
- Encourage your child to use color, shape and size words when describing objects.
- Visit new places in your community. Talk about what happens at the fire or police station. Go to the post office. Ask your child questions about what he sees. Encourage him to ask about things he does not understand or wants to know more about.
- Make a grocery list with your child and have her find those items at the store. She can copy the names of her favorite cereal or draw a picture of the fruit your family wants.
- Go to a farmer’s market to explore new foods and talk with the farmers.

Some great books for Spring:

“*It’s Spring!*” by Linda Glaser
“*UnderGROUND*” by Denise Fleming
“*Let’s Count*” by Tana Hoban
“*So Many Circles, So Many Squares*” by Tana Hoban
“*Rosie’s Walk*” by Pat Hutchins
“*Color Farm*” by Lois Ehlert

Summer

- Explore your neighborhood together; find new places to go and meet new people. Go on a picnic or visit a new park, a museum or the zoo. Talk about your experiences.
- Visit your child’s elementary school throughout the summer. Plan play times on the playground, at parks, and at homes with other children who will attend the same school.
- Choose the place at home where you will keep your child’s kindergarten supplies, such as his backpack and library books.
- Arrange an appointment with your pediatrician or health clinic before the first day of school.
- Continue to read books together. As you read, ask questions about what she thinks will happen in the story. When you finish reading, ask her to retell the story.

Some great books for summer:

“*Beetle Bop*” by Denise Fleming
“*The Kissing Hand*” by Audrey Penn
“*Wag a Tail*” by Lois Ehlert
“*Yoko Writes her Name*” by Rosemary Wells
“*Actual Size*” by Steve Jenkins
“*How Do Dinosaurs Go to School?*” by Jane Yolen
“*School Bus*” by Donald Crews
“*Countdown to Kindergarten*” by Alison McGhee
Every kindergarten class is different, but all kindergarten classes allow children to take part in whole group, small group and individual learning experiences throughout the day. To the left is a sample kindergarten schedule.

Children will have an easier transition to kindergarten if they are able to:

- Solve problems.
- Feel comfortable in a new environment.
- Make decisions.
- Communicate so others will understand.
- Search for new knowledge.
- Take risks.

Some community resources in Fairfax County are:

**Fairfax County Public Libraries**
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library)
Each library branch has a special section of children’s books designed to build your child’s imagination and early literacy skills. Up to 50 books can be borrowed for three weeks at a time. Books are available in several languages. Special activities and story times are offered throughout the year for preschool and school-age children. The monthly “Ready to Read” newsletter available on the library website provides great ideas for books to read to your child.

**Fairfax County Park Authority**
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks)
Fairfax County has numerous parks of varying sizes. Two may be of special interest: Clemyjontri Park in McLean and Frying Pan Farm Park in Herndon.

Enjoyable classes for preschoolers are available in “Parktakes” magazine, found online or at your public library.

**Clemyjontri** is a two-acre playground divided into four outdoor “rooms.” It is accessible to all children, including those with physical disabilities. It has a carousel and picnic pavilion. The address is 6317 Georgetown Pike, McLean, VA 22101, 703-388-2807.

**Frying Pan Farm Park** includes a replica of a 1920’s farm, a carousel, hayrides, country store and Visitor’s Center. Children can see a variety of farm animals and old farm equipment. Picnic tables and a playground are available. Frying Pan Farm Park is located at 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon, VA 20171, 703-437-9101.

**Fairfax County Health Clinics**
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/clinics](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/clinics)
The Fairfax County Health Department offers free school-required immunizations at five clinic locations. Hours are extended during the summer. Three of these locations* also offer dental services for children over 3 years old – an appointment is needed.

*Joseph Willard Health Center*  
3750 Old Lee Highway  
Fairfax, VA  22030  
703-246-7100

*Herndon/Reston Office*  
1850 Cameron Glen Dr. Suite 100  
Reston, VA  22090  
703-481-4242

*Mount Vernon Office*  
8350 Richmond Hwy. Suite 233  
Alexandria, VA 22309  
703-704-5203

**Annandale District Office**  
7611 Little River Turnpike Suite 400E (East Wing)  
Annandale, VA 22003  
703-534-8343

**Springfield District Office**  
8136 Old Keene Mill Road The Cary Building Suite A100  
Springfield, VA 22152  
703-569-1031

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<td>Recess</td>
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<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:50 a.m.</td>
<td>Quiet Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:20 p.m.</td>
<td>PE/Music</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:50 p.m.</td>
<td>Math</td>
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<td>1:50 p.m.</td>
<td>Learning Centers</td>
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<td>Social Studies</td>
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<td>Read Aloud</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:30 - 3:40 p.m.</td>
<td>Sharing / Dismissal</td>
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Helpful Resources for Parents

Publications

Helping Your Child Love to Learn
Learn about early childhood development from birth to age 5. Discover activities families and educators can introduce to encourage growth in science, math, literacy, language, creative arts, social and emotional development, and health and physical development. Available at FairfaxCounty.gov Search “School Readiness”

School Readiness Read and Share
Read and Share is an interactive guide to exploring books with young children. Educators and families can enjoy reading books together and then engage in fun experiences to extend the stories. Augmented Reality videos, using a free phone app, create unique interactive experiences that can be enjoyed by all ages. The books highlighted in Read and Share are available through the Fairfax County Public Library system.

Videos
A Closer Look at School Readiness
www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjPK53Gfo9Y
When a child starts kindergarten, it is a significant milestone for the entire family. A successful transition occurs when families, elementary school staff, and early childhood educators come together to support each individual child.

Fairfax County Public Schools Welcomes you to Kindergarten
www.fcps.edu/academics/elementary-school-academics-k-6/kindergarten
This video provides an overview of the FCPS Kindergarten program.

Apps

Vroom
Vroom is a free app that is available on iOS and Android devices (computers, tablets, smartphones). It is designed to provide parents and early educators with tips to support children’s learning based on current science. With each engaging brain building tip that is suggested, there is an explanation of the science that supports the experience. Explore Vroom as a fun way to help children learn and develop the skills they will need in school and beyond.

CDC Milestone Tracker Mobile App
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has developed a free Milestone Tracker App for iOS and Android users that is available in both English and Spanish. Using this app, you can track a child’s progress and view suggestions to support children’s development from 2 months to 5 years of age.
It’s Time to Register for Kindergarten!

If your child will be 5 years old by September 30, now is the time to contact your neighborhood elementary school for information and the registration packet.

Find out how: [http://boundary.fcps.edu/boundary](http://boundary.fcps.edu/boundary)