

How to Help Your Child Prepare for PreK-4

1. **Read.** Every day! Anywhere, anytime. Talk about books. Use your hand/finger to follow the words as you read them, not to teach reading but rather teach how we read books: left to right and top to bottom. Notice letters all around you such as the M in McDonalds, the W in Walmart or the letters STOP in the sign. Find the letters in their own name when looking at a book or on the boxes at the grocery store.
2. **Sing or Chant.** Sing Nursery Rhymes, Jump Rope Rhymes, songs, cheers or poems.
3. **Rhyme** – play rhyming games where you say as many rhymes as you can for a given word. Start with one syllable words like dog, cat, fox, mouse, etc.
4. **Count.** Ask your child to count how many Cheerios are on the plate or how many green beans he or she has. Count the blocks or dolls they have. Just count from 1 to 10 anytime as well.
5. **Talk.** Talk with your child. Have a conversation about anything and help them learn to stay on topic and take turns talking so everyone isn't talking at once. Teach them to ask for things that they need. Have them ask nicely and say thank you.
6. **Write.** Let your child write their name with crayons, washable markers, chalk or water on the sidewalk. Let them write the letters in shaving cream, sand or dirt. Make it fun to learn the letters in their name.
7. **Climb.** Get outside and run, roll, slide, swing, and climb. Gallop around the yard, skip across the patio, hop like a bunny, etc.
8. **Share.** Play with your child and take turns with toys. Help them learn to ask for a toy and sometimes make them wait a bit for a turn so they understand they won't always get it first. Sharing and taking turns is an important social skill.
9. **Be independent.** Children like to be independent and do it themselves at this age. Embrace that and teach them to hang up their coat, clean up after themselves, use the bathroom without help, take off and put on their shoes and put on a sweatshirt and jacket. If they can zip and button a coat, that's even better.
10. **Cut.** Let your child use safety scissors and cut up the newspaper when you're done or junk mail. Sit with them and teach them to hold the scissors. They love it and it builds their fine motor skills.

11. **Encourage Responsibility.** By teaching them and then allowing them the time to put on their own shoes, dress themselves, put on their own jacket, and clean up after themselves after play and meals, you are empowering them, giving them a chance to succeed and feel accomplished, and helping them to grow in their independence. Doing these tasks for 20 students in school is very time consuming and takes away from my teaching of math, literacy, science, social studies, and religion. Most importantly, it is good for them!

12. **Encourage Respect** - when your child is frustrated, sad, angry or having a difficult time, help them learn the words they need to talk about what they are feeling. They aren't sure how to navigate these big feelings they have and often lash out in less than desirable ways. We teach that no one knows why you're feeling the way you are so you have to kindly tell them. We reinforce that our bodies (hand, legs, etc.) are for helping, not hurting. Teach them to listen to authority, you and their teacher, by being clear with directions and following through with them. When they follow directions, praise them for being a good listener and doing what was asked of them. When they choose not to do as you ask, provide a consequence that fits the situation. It may be removing them from an activity because they aren't following directions, or removing a toy that they aren't using correctly, or having them take a time out because their emotions are keeping them from communicating respectfully. Be consistent. Children want to make the right choices, they need us to teach them how to do so respectfully.

13. **Encourage Leadership** - When your child can help themselves, express feelings appropriately, listen to directions and follow them, take turns talking without interrupting others, and help others to do the same, they are leading by example. This is a great age to teach and encourage respect and responsibilities because they are eager to learn, happy to be able to do things for themselves, feel proud when they do, and care about making those who care for them proud!

14. **Have Fun!** Above all else, have fun. Know when your child is losing interest or is tired and stop. A happy, positive experience allows for learning to happen.

Let's work together to raise kind, happy, independent, knowledgeable, and school-ready children!