

Fostering Independence with Your Kindergarten Student

Preparing your child for Kindergarten involves so much more than learning letters and numbers. Please take a few minutes to read through some tasks that make the transition much easier when they are practiced before Kindergarten begins.

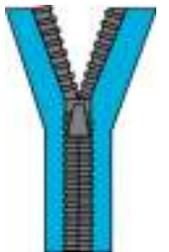
1. Putting Away Your Belongings and Turning in Work to the Teacher



Preschool teachers start to develop this skill in school, but Kindergarten teachers require it. Kids need to be able to unpack their backpacks, check their binders each morning for important notes and lunch money, and keep track of their supplies. Encourage your child to clean up after themselves at the end of meals, tidy their toys at the end of the day, and helping with simple tasks will help prepare them to be responsible in a classroom community. No one expects them to walk in the door on the first day and do this perfectly, but kids who can already do similar things at home are a lot more successful and feel a lot more comfortable in Kindergarten.

2. Putting On and Off, Zippering and Fastening Your Coat

Think of how difficult it is to get out the door with your own children sometimes and imagine how much time would be taken up in a classroom if the teacher had to help everyone get their coats on and off! Teaching your child how to dress and undress themselves helps them feel confident in the classroom and will give them more time to explore and learn.



3. Shoe Independence

This is a big one! Sooner or later ALL children learn to tie independently, but much like riding a bike without training wheels, they learn when they're ready. PLEASE send your child to school with shoes & boots they can take off and put on independently. Imagine winter, when we'll be putting on and taking off shoes to change into boots at least 4 times a day! The quicker we work through these transitions, the more time we have for learning.

4. Lunch Routines



Being able to get your own food open is so important! Lunch time is limited and even though there are adults available to assist children, it may take a while. The last thing you want is a hungry child at school! Making sure they know how to open their water bottle or juice box and tear, unsnap, unzip all of the containers inside makes the day go much more smoothly. Try out new items at home first and don't send them in until you know your child can open them alone.

5. Germ Control

Practice hand washing, nose blowing and coughing into elbows! We cannot stress this enough. Think of all those runny noses and coughs that run rampant at school. It's so important for children to know how to blow their own nose (and not simply use their sleeves!). Make it a habit to wash hands after bathroom use, nose blowing and before eating. Learning to do these things independently will help us ALL stay healthier!



6. Offer lots of opportunity for unstructured/free play

Yes, play actually fosters independence - especially when it's unstructured. How? Children are forced to come up with their own ideas and engage in play independently. They become increasingly self-reliant. This is an important skill for children to master at home and at school. Teachers need students to be independent, to be able to follow simple directions without needing an adult constantly by their side. While it's wonderful to have structured and planned activities, but make sure you provide your child with ample opportunity to play and explore on their own as well. This will benefit them at home, school and later in life.



7. Allow children to feel some degree of frustration

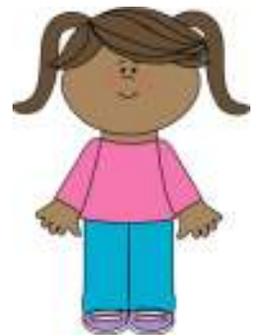
It's hard to see our children struggle with something and natural as parents to want to make things easier for them. However, struggling isn't always a bad thing. It teaches children to keep trying, engages critical thinking & problem solving, and



helps children practice patience. Kindergarten will present your child with many new challenges. Many things will not be mastered easily or quickly (think about all those new reading, writing and math skills). You do not want them to become easily upset, frustrated or left feeling defeated when confronted with something new and/or difficult. One of the best ways to learn is by doing. The next time your child asks for help getting their shirt or shoes on - encourage them to try again. Cheer them on. Walk them through it by asking questions like "what should you do first?" or "why do you think that didn't work?". Helping your child break out of their comfort zone may result in some frustration but this will give them wonderful opportunities to become more learn how to deal with these experiences.

8. Provide children with opportunities to make choices.

This is a big one. Your child is going to be spending a big chunk of their day at school - away from you. They need to be able to make decisions and think for themselves. They must be able to follow rules and make positive choices. Children need to be able to follow classroom routines and engage in activities with distractions present (for instance, other children, noise, etc.). By giving your child opportunities to make choices you are preparing them for the classroom. Encourage them to choose their outfit for the day, to select the books you read together at bedtime, to decide what to pack in their lunch. Offering choices helps children develop a sense of autonomy and enables them to make decisions when confronted with choices at school. Help give your child the confidence to respond to challenges and make their own decisions at school. Help them become their own person!



You'll be amazed by how much your child will grow this year in Kindergarten! We thank you in advance for helping us challenge them to become as independent as possible.