

How do I prepare my child for kindergarten?

As your child's first day of school creeps up, you will both experience different feelings. You're excited that he's old enough to start school. At the same time, you wonder if he will adjust to the new routine.

Your child may also be excited. But if she's never spent time away from you she may feel a bit overwhelmed by the prospect. Similarly, for a child who is already in a childcare setting, spending part of her day in junior or senior kindergarten may pose some new challenges. A new and unfamiliar routine and teacher may take some getting used to.

Whether it's your child's first time away from you or he's making the transition from childcare to school, here are some things you can do to help make the move easier.

- 1. Talk about the new routine.**
Talk to your caregiver about the new routine when school starts. Share this with your child so he is prepared for the change.
- 2. Talk about what won't change.**
Prior to school starting, both you and your caregiver can talk about kindergarten, providing reassurance by reminding your child about all the things that will still be the same.
- 3. Visit the school in advance.**
If possible, during the summer, visit the school your child will be attending. If there is a playground, you may even want to spend some time there letting her play to become familiar with the environment.
- 4. Find out the name of your child's teacher.**
School administrative offices are often open before the first day of school and may be able to provide you with some information.
- 5. Ease your child into class.**
Ask the school if you can visit during the first week perhaps staying for the first hour or until your child seems settled.
- 6. Reassure your child that you will be back.**
Make sure your child knows who will pick her up when school finishes. An anxious child may want to know exactly when that will be. Offer a cue from the routine, for instance: "After you clean up the room you will hear the bell ring and you will know it's time to go home. We'll be waiting to pick you up."
- 7. Be enthusiastic about school.**
Talk about the wonderful things he will be doing at school – making friends, different kinds of art and play activities and of course learning. This should be done at home with you as well as with your child's caregiver.
- 8. Help your child find friends from school.**
Find other children in the neighbourhood attending school. Your caregiver can help. Talk about them noting how much they enjoy school. Schedule some play dates in advance and have at least one familiar face.

9. **Share your own stories.**

Talk about some of your own stories about school – what was it like for you when you started. If there are older siblings have them join in also.

10. **Get ready together.**

Include her in the preparation for school. This can be as simple as deciding on snacks to send each day or buying school supplies. Including her will make her feel that this day is special and it really is all about her.

11. **Share the excitement of growing up.**

Starting school is often seen as a sign of being a "big boy". Talk to your child about how he feels about school. Being a "big boy" may be just what he wants or the prospect may be overwhelming. Be sensitive to his feelings and gently continue to talk about the wonderful things that happen at school.

12. **Create a neighbourhood walking bus.**

If there are other children in the neighbourhood who your child knows and will be attending the same school you may want to walk to school together giving a sense of community to your child even away from his home.

13. **Make a special exhibit at home.**

Set up a special place at home where your child will be able to display work that comes home from school. Even before school starts you can decorate this space together.

Source : <http://www.investinkids.ca>