

# IS MY CHILD KINDERGARTEN-READY?

Written by Maureen Khallad; Photo: Fotolia.com

All parents want their child to do well in school. Too many parents think that preparing their preschoolers for Kindergarten simply involves their child knowing their ABC's, numbers, and colors; they couldn't be more wrong. Here's a checklist of skills your four-year-old should be able to do by the time they enter Kindergarten. If your child does not have the above skills right now, don't panic! But it is time to get to work before September. Your child can accomplish a lot of these skills with time and patience on your part.

## **Checklist for Kindergarten entry:**

- Can your child dress themselves independently? Including putting on their boots, shoes, and coat?
- Can your child speak to a teacher and communicate their needs?
- Can your child attend to toileting independently?
- Can your child listen and follow three oral instructions and carry them out with minimum assistance?
- Can your child draw shapes? Circles, triangles, etc.?
- Can your child sit on the floor without flopping over? Why is this important? Children with weak core muscles need these muscles to be strong.
- Can your child join in independently to play with other children?
- Can your child hold a crayon in the 'tripod' grasp or do they 'fist color'?
- Can your child open/close snack bags independently? Can they hold utensils independently?
- Can your child use scissors independently?
- Can your child print their name or recognize letters in their name?
- Does your child know their phone number? Address?
- Can your child hop? Jump? Balance on one foot?

## **Here are some things you can do at home to ensure your child is ready for Kindergarten:**

Allow your child to dress themselves. It hardwires eye-hand coordination, balance, and strengthens hands. Schedule enough time in the morning and at pickup time if your child is in daycare to accomplish this skill.

Allow your child to feed themselves. Your child should be eating with a fork and cutting with a knife at the table. Assisting with meal preparation encourages vocabulary, strengthens hands, and may encourage healthy eating.

Read daily to your child. This is essential to building their vocabulary and early reading skills. Turning pages encourages fine motor skills.

Get outside and allow your child to run in safe open spaces. Allow them to climb. Doing so encourages confidence, strengthens gross motor skills, and strengthens hands for printing.

Talk to your children. Have conversations that require thought and more than simple yes or no answers.

When coloring, use wax crayons instead of felts. Felt markers do nothing to strengthen hands. Buy coloring books and encourage coloring inside the lines to strengthen eye-hand coordination.

Don't jump in too early to solve your child's problems. Allow them to learn to problem-solve independently. Encourage your child to do more for themselves.

Play 'follow the leader' so that your child knows what to expect when a teacher asks the children to line up.

If you know your child is shy, placing your child in a preschool program first helps your child not be overlooked in a busy Kindergarten classroom. Experiences outside the home encourage confidence in managing different environments. Try to ensure your child is exposed to a variety of experiences prior to Kindergarten.

If your child requires longer time for transitions, work on shortening that time. Teachers do not have time to wait for your child to decide on when to start or finish required tasks.

Work on their empathy and manners. The motto 'treat others as you wish to be treated' works well for future years in school.

Ensure that you attend all orientations for Kindergarten and maintain contact with your child's teachers throughout the school years.

### **Still worried?**

Preschool programs can assist you with preparing your child for Kindergarten. Children learn how to function in a classroom setting and then Kindergarten is not such a big shock. If your child is attending a daycare, ensure that the daycare has an age-appropriate program geared to getting four-year-old preschoolers ready for Kindergarten. Check that the program is not a mixed age group of three- to five-year-olds. Three-year-olds are not ready to tackle the skills required for Kindergarten. They should not be expected to listen, play, or learn at the same level as a four-year-old.