

Let's Get Ready For School



Starting school is an exciting time but it can also be daunting for some children. This is where Early Years settings, schools and parents can work together to make the transition as smooth as possible.

The following information is designed to help you with some basic advice that you may find useful in the following days, weeks and months to help your child be as ready as possible for starting at primary school.

It will hopefully help you understand what being 'school ready' looks like. It's not about academic achievement e.g reading and writing. It's about developing life long learning skills through play, becoming more independent in self help skills and building resilience.

These weekly newsletters will hopefully provide you with information and ideas that you may find useful in your journey for starting school.



SWINDON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Early Years Quality and
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Let's Get Ready for School Part 1

I am happy to go to school

Is your child happy to be away from you? Does your child know about their new school?



Steps to Success



Talk about school

Talk to your child about what school life will be like. If their school is holding any pre-visits, take your child along. These can be very positive and help your child develop their confidence.

Your new school may be able to provide a picture of your child's teacher and classroom to help with your discussion about school.

Say goodbye

Try to make 'saying goodbye' a positive time. Don't sneak away, but make sure to say goodbye and tell them that you're leaving. Even if you are feeling sad or worried, if you can smile and say goodbye confidently, your child will feel more confident.

Looking after you

For some parents, leaving your child at school can be hard. It is natural to feel worried, guilty or upset especially if your child cries as you leave. Be reassured that your child will settle and this experience will allow them to become more independent. Make sure you plan something nice like a slice of cake with friends for those first few days of school.



Useful websites

- <https://www.annafreud.org/early-years/early-years-in-mind/common-difficulties/separation-anxiety/>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 2

I enjoy playing and exploring new things

Is your child confident to explore the fun, exciting and unfamiliar experiences of school?



Ask questions

Develop your child's confidence in expressing themselves by encouraging them to ask questions. You don't need to know the answer! You can find it out together.

Ask your child open ended questions- questions that can't be answered with yes or no and don't have a right or wrong answer.

Examples include:

Can you tell me about what you've made?

How are these the same?

Why do you think that happened?



Go with the flow

Give your child time to engage in activities and process what they are seeing/feeling. Talk to them about their interests. Let them take the lead.



Go for a walk

Talk about what you can see, hear, smell, taste and feel. Can you collect some items to take home? Help to expand your child's interest in new things and extend their language.



Useful websites

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/getting-outdoors>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/play>
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/look-say-sing-play/>



Let's Get Ready for School Part 3

I enjoy books

Does your child enjoy looking at books?
Do they get opportunities to listen to
you read? Are they curious about books?



Steps to Success



Picture Books

Picture books are highly valuable in developing children's enjoyment of books. The bright illustrations make them fun to read and allow the child to develop their own understanding of story structure without worrying about reading text. Can your child tell a story just from the pictures?



Bedtime stories

Reading together is a time to connect and comfort your child. Bedtime stories help your child relax ready for sleep. It's also a perfect opportunity for you to spark a love for reading.



Build up their vocabulary

Use pictures to start building vocabulary. Talk with your child about what the pictures show. Ask them to point to things as you say them. Use opportunities in everyday life. Build vocabulary and listening skills by talking through what you're seeing and doing while cooking, driving or visiting new places.



Useful websites

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/the-toddler-club-sharing-stories-tips/zxbw7yc>
- <https://wordsforlife.org.uk/parent-support/reading-your-child/>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 4

I enjoy mark making

Does your child use their hands and fingers to draw, colour and paint?



Don't Panic!

It's fantastic if your child can recognise their name but we do not expect children to be able to write their name when they start school.

Mark making opportunities

Although it is tempting to think about early mark-making as using a pencil, crayon, or paints, there are lots of different materials your children can use to make marks. This could include mark-making in natural materials such as mud, sand or snow. They can also use different tools to make their marks, including natural materials such as grasses, sticks and feathers. The key is that they're exploring the media in a way that is engaging and creative to them.



Writing is part of physical development

A key area for development in the early years is around this physical aspect of mark-making – building the strength and coordination needed to make those marks to begin with. To develop these skills, play should focus on activities that promote both fine and gross motor skills. Ideas include: climbing frames/trees, swimming, playing catch, threading beads, playdough.



Useful websites

- <https://www.pacey.org.uk/parents/resources-for-parents/tips,-factsheets-and-downloads/mark-making-tips-for-parents/>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 5

I can use the toilet

Can your child recognise that they need the toilet, how to wipe themselves, pull their clothes up and down, flush the toilet and wash their hands?



Steps to Success



Understanding toilet rules

Using the toilet at school can be different to using the toilet at home for some children. Remind your child of the following steps:

- Close the door
- Underwear down
- Wee or poo
- Wipe
- Underwear up
- Flush
- Wash your hands

Use the toilet on their own

Start by helping your child use the toilet, moving to simply supervising them. Having a poo can be tricky for some children, especially when it comes to wiping. Once they have mastered this, build their confidence with toileting by allowing them to go on their own. Get your child used to the sound of the flush. Whilst training your child, think carefully about the clothing your child is wearing. Make sure they can remove them easily.

Praise

Remember to praise your child throughout this process.



Useful websites

- www.bbc.co.uk/tinyhappy-people
- <https://www.eric.org.uk/poo-and-wee>
- <https://localoffer.swindon.gov.uk/content/send-local-offer/landing-pages/health-landing-pages-and-content-pages/toilet-training/>



Let's Get Ready for School Part 6

I can get myself dressed and undressed




Can your child get themselves dressed?
Can they undo buttons, use a zip and put
on their own shoes and socks?

Steps to Success



Fine motor activities

Play together to complete a range of fine motor activities as these will help build their skills in undoing tricky buttons and zips. Ideas include:

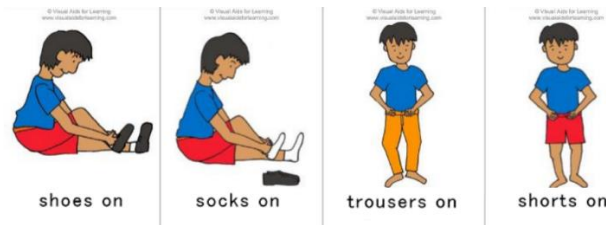
- Lego
- Puzzles
- Threading 
- Role play with figures eg Paw Patrol
- Playdough
- Cutting and Sticking

Practice putting on their uniform together

Provide your child lots of opportunities to wear clothes with buttons, zips and tights. This will help with most school uniforms.

Children learn in different ways so you might need to vary your approach. There are different ways you can help:

- Physically assist your child. Put your hands over your child's and help them to get dressed.
- Show your child. Put your clothes on at the same time as your child and show them what to do.
- Tell your child. Talk your child through the steps.



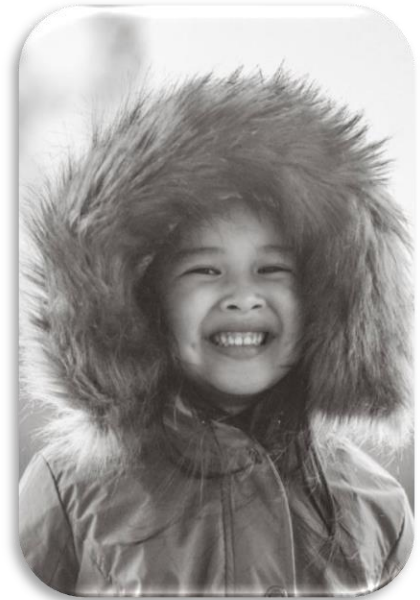
Useful websites

- <https://www.hct.nhs.uk/media/1255/developing-dressing-skills.pdf>
- <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/self-care/dressing-myself/>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 7

I can put on my coat

Can your child take their coat off and put it on again? Are they able to zip it up? This self-help skill will ensure they stay warm outside.



Steps to Success



Start with a bigger coat

Loose fitting coats are easier to manage. Let your child practice by putting on your jacket or maybe an older sibling. Can you make it into a game? Who can get their coat on first?

Practice makes perfect when it comes to putting arms into sleeves. Use different tops to develop this skill.



Let them take the lead

It can be tempting to take over when your child is struggling to put on their coat, especially when you are running late! Give your child time to practice their skills and recognise by themselves when their coat isn't on quite right. Give them lots of encouragement and talk them through what to do if they get stuck.

Choose the best way for your child

Did you know that there are many different ways that you can put on a coat? When you find what works best with your child, share it with your child's network to ensure everyone is helping them the same way.

<https://youtu.be/DVRn0GYQBMY>

https://youtu.be/lkx_-f8-Llw



Useful websites

- <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/268376/putting-on-and-taking-off-a-jacket-information-sheet.pdf>
- <https://teachpreschool.org/2013/02/06/how-to-put-on-a-coat>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 8

I have enough sleep

Does your child have a good bedtime routine? Having enough sleep is important to ensure they are not tired for school.



Steps to
Success



Routine is key

Routines help children feel safe and build healthy habits. A routine helps to support children's body clock and aid relaxation. Top tips from "the Sleep Charity" include:

- Do the same thing at the same time each day, including having a set wake up time each morning. We know this is difficult at the weekend, but it is important to have these set times to support your child's body clock.
- Turn off all screens at the start of the routine, they may suppress the body's production of melatonin, the sleep hormone, and make it more difficult to nod off.
- A bath 30 minutes before bed can help to promote sleep, the decrease in body temperature after a bath can help us to nod off more easily.
- Once in bed sharing a story is a great way to end the day or older children may prefer to read independently.
- Take some time to plan your routine and write it down. Work out what time it will start, this should be an hour before your child goes to sleep. Display the new routine somewhere where everybody in the home can follow it.

Useful websites

- <https://localoffer.swindon.gov.uk/content/send-local-offer/landing-pages/health-landing-pages-and-content-pages/sleep/>
- <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/children/bedtime-routines/>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/top-tips-for-a-calmer-bedtime-routine/z7cw2fr>



Let's Get Ready for School Part 9

I can tidy up and look after my belongings

Can your child tidy up their toys when they have finished playing? Can they recognise their coat, water bottle and bag?



Steps to
Success



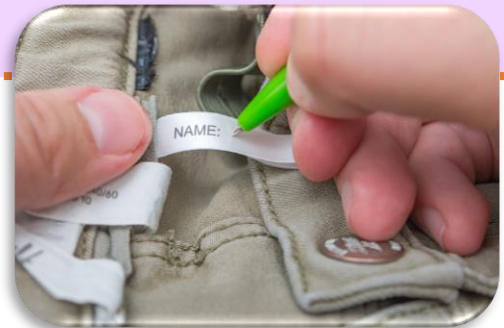
Tidy up time at home

Encourage your child to help tidy up after themselves at home. This will encourage them to do the same with resources at school. Develop your child's confidence by asking them to tidy away specific items such as 3 red bricks.



Label everything!

Anything your child takes into school, make sure it has a label. Staff will be much more likely to find it if it goes missing! It will also help your child find their belongings at the end of the school day. A labelled water bottle is easier to find amongst 30 other bottles.



Remember this rhyme...

Choose it!

Use it!

Put it away!



Useful websites

- <https://www.earlyyearscentre.org/eyc/enabling-environment/top-tips-encouraging-children-tidy/>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 10

I can eat meals sitting at a table



Can your child use a knife and fork? Are they able to open fruit or packaging by themselves? Can they drink from an open cup?



Meal Time Environment

Sitting at a dining table allows your child to be part of the group and enjoy the social benefits of eating together. It also aids skill development as they can watch how you hold your cutlery, lift your cup etc. You can model for them, and sitting side by side or opposite your child is a good way to do this.

Open it alone

Model and support your child in opening wrapped items such as biscuits or crisps. Assist them in peeling fruit as this may be given at snack times.

Using a knife and fork

Think about the utensils you are using. Spoons or forks with thick and/or textured handles are easier to hold. A spoon or fork with a short handle is easier to control. Consider the weight of the cutlery.

Sometimes something heavier can be easier to control. Use a bowl or plate with a raised edge so the child has something to scoop against. Place a non-slip mat underneath the bowl or plate to prevent it sliding when your child is learning to scoop, stab, spread or cut.

Encourage a good cutlery grasp right from the start; your child's index finger should point down the back of the fork or knife towards the prongs and blade.

Useful websites

- <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/272352/sitting-at-table-information-sheet.pdf>
- <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/272346/using-cutlery-information-sheet.pdf>

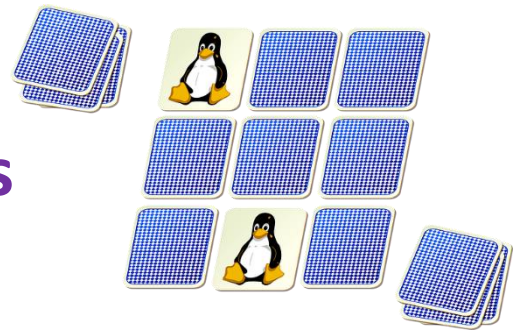


Let's Get Ready for School Part 11

I can follow instructions

Can your child follow instructions? Are they able to understand the importance of rules in keeping them safe?

Steps to
Success



Play games

Games are a great way to introduce simple instructions and rules to young children.

Get your child to help

Give your child simple tasks to do such as putting their shoes away when they come home or tidying away toys before dinner time. These simple expectations will help your child understand the importance of following rules and instructions.



How to give effective instructions to children

- Gain your child's attention by saying their name and getting to their level.
- Be specific in your request e.g. "pick up 4 blocks" instead of "tidy up".
- Use "wait time", a three- to seven-second pause after you say something or ask a question. Research shows that kids process better what you have to say — and respond to it appropriately — when they let it sink in.
- Give instructions one at a time.
- If possible, use visual clues.

Simon Says is a great game to play to develop your child's skills in following instructions.



Useful websites

- <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/10-tips-to-help-your-child-follow-directions>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 12

I can share

Is your child able to share toys? Can they take turns when playing?

Steps to
Success



Play turn taking games

Games are a great way to sharing and taking turns. Use language such as "I have had a turn, now it's your turn".

Empathise with your child

Learning to share can be challenging. Tell your child you recognise how hard it can be to share and that you know they are feeling upset.

Praise

Praise! Praise! And more praise! Stay positive and notice your child sharing or waiting for the turn.

Support your child

Teaching a young child not to snatch an item that they want from a child is also a much more age appropriate strategy than expecting the other child who is involved to share with them. This is because you will be teaching the child how to control their impulses. This is a key skill that toddlers need to learn - and it helps them understand that there are sometimes 'boundaries' that they need to respect. They will also learn about what is not theirs to take.



Useful websites

- <https://www.annafreud.org/early-years/early-years-in-mind/common-difficulties/sharing/>
- <https://www.emmasdiary.co.uk/baby/child-behaviour/teaching-your-toddler-to-share>

