

The Kindergarten Year

A parent's roadmap to the kindergarten year — the milestones, the learning, the social growth, what to watch for, and how to help your child launch their school journey.



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THE LAUNCH OF THE SCHOOL JOURNEY

Kindergarten is the **foundation year** — where a child learns to be a student, and where reading and math begin. It's a huge year of academic *and* social-emotional growth. This roadmap walks the year in **ten steps**, so you know what to expect and how to help.

General guidance. Children develop at their own pace, and expectations vary by school and state. This roadmap describes typical patterns; for concerns about your child, talk with their teacher, school, or pediatrician.

What Kindergarten Is About

WHAT TO KNOW

Kindergarten blends **play and academics** to build foundations. The biggest job is learning to *be a student* — following routines, separating from home, focusing, and getting along — while beginning to read, write, and work with numbers.

BY THE NUMBERS

Foundation year

launch, not race

Learning to learn

routines & focus

Play + academics

both matter

HOW TO HELP

Keep perspective: kindergarten is about a **strong, happy launch** — a child who loves school and can share and focus is right on track.

GOOD TO KNOW

Social-emotional growth is **as important as academics** this year — sometimes more so.

Support Early Reading

WHAT TO KNOW

Reading begins here with **phonemic awareness** (hearing sounds), letter-sound knowledge, sight words, and lots of being read to. Most children finish kindergarten recognizing letters and sounds and reading a few simple words.

BY THE NUMBERS

Letters & sounds

the building blocks

Sight words

a starter set

Read aloud daily

the #1 support

HOW TO HELP

Read aloud **every single day**, play with rhymes and sounds, and point out letters in the world — this is the highest-impact thing you can do all year.

GOOD TO KNOW

Don't worry if your child isn't "reading" fluently yet — knowing letters and sounds is the real kindergarten goal.

Support Early Math

WHAT TO KNOW

Kindergarten math is **number sense**: counting (often to 100), recognizing and writing numbers to 20, comparing amounts (more/less), naming shapes, and spotting patterns — built through play and everyday counting.

BY THE NUMBERS

Counting

often to 100

Numbers to 20

recognize & write

Shapes & patterns

everywhere

HOW TO HELP

Count everything together, compare amounts, name shapes, and spot patterns during daily routines — concrete, playful math builds real number sense.

GOOD TO KNOW

Math games and counting at snack teach more than worksheets — keep it hands-on and fun.

Nurture Social-Emotional Growth

WHAT TO KNOW

This year, children learn to **separate from home, share and take turns, follow routines, manage big feelings, and make friends**. These skills are the bedrock of everything academic that follows.

BY THE NUMBERS

Separation

time apart gets easier

Sharing & turns

the social basics

Feelings

learning to manage them

HOW TO HELP

Coach the social-emotional skills at home — turn-taking, naming feelings, following routines — and celebrate friendships and kindness as much as ABCs.

GOOD TO KNOW

Tears at drop-off in the early weeks are **normal** — most children settle within a month.

Set Up Learning Habits

WHAT TO KNOW

Kindergarten homework is (or should be) **minimal** — usually just daily reading and maybe a small activity. The habits that matter most are a consistent bedtime, a routine, and reading together every day.

BY THE NUMBERS

Minimal homework

don't over-drill

Read daily

the core habit

Routine & sleep

the real foundations

HOW TO HELP

Build **gentle routines** — consistent sleep, a daily read-aloud, and a calm morning — rather than pushing academic drills at home.

WATCH OUT

If homework becomes a nightly battle in kindergarten, **step back** — protect the love of learning over completing worksheets.

Understand Assessment

WHAT TO KNOW

Kindergarten uses **observation and screenings**, not high-stakes tests. Teachers assess letter/sound knowledge, counting, and social skills informally, and may run early literacy screenings to catch who needs support.

BY THE NUMBERS

No big tests

observation-based

Screenings

catch early needs

Ongoing

teachers watch daily

HOW TO HELP

Ask the teacher **how your child is progressing** at conferences — and take early screening results seriously; catching a reading need now is a gift.

GOOD TO KNOW

An early screening flag isn't bad news — it's the earliest, best chance to get support before a child falls behind.



Know Your Role This Year

WHAT TO KNOW

Your job: **read daily, build routines, communicate with the teacher, and grow a love of school.** Attend conferences, stay in touch, and be your child's calm, encouraging home base.

BY THE NUMBERS

Read & routine

the daily core

Communicate

with the teacher

Encourage

love of learning

HOW TO HELP

Show up: **read together nightly, keep routines steady, attend conferences, and talk with the teacher** — your involvement this year sets the tone for many.

GOOD TO KNOW

Kids whose families read with them and stay engaged in kindergarten **carry that advantage** for years.

Watch For

WHAT TO KNOW

Most struggles are normal variation, but flag persistent trouble with **letters and sounds, speech, separation and anxiety, social connection, or attention** — the earlier a real need is caught, the better.

BY THE NUMBERS

Reading blocks

letters/sounds not clicking

Speech & language

hard to understand

Social/attention

persistent struggles

HOW TO HELP

If a struggle **persists and interferes** — not just an occasional hard day — raise it with the teacher and ask about a screening or evaluation.

WATCH OUT

Trust your gut: If something feels off (especially with reading, speech, or anxiety), **ask early** — you don't have to wait.

Prevent the Summer Slide

WHAT TO KNOW

Summer after kindergarten is for **keeping skills alive without pressure**: reading together, counting and playing math into daily life, and lots of play, talk, and experiences that build language.

BY THE NUMBERS

Keep reading

every day, for fun

Playful math

count & compare

Talk & explore

language grows

HOW TO HELP

Over the summer, **read daily, weave in counting and games, and talk about everything** — it keeps skills fresh without a single worksheet.

GOOD TO KNOW

The “summer slide” is real — but daily reading and rich conversation prevent most of it, playfully.

Look Ahead to First Grade

WHAT TO KNOW

First grade is where **reading takes off** and the academic pace picks up. Ending kindergarten knowing letters and sounds, counting confidently, and loving school sets your child up beautifully.

BY THE NUMBERS

Grade 1

reading takes off

More structure

academics grow

Strong base

letters, counting, love of school

HOW TO HELP

Head into first grade celebrating your child's growth — the foundation you built this year (skills *and* a love of learning) is exactly what they need next.

GOOD TO KNOW

The best kindergarten "graduate" isn't the one who reads earliest — it's the one who is confident, curious, and eager for more.

The Kindergarten Year at a Glance

A friendly snapshot of typical kindergarten milestones — a guide, not a test. Children vary widely, and that's normal.

Reading & literacy

Recognizes most letters and their sounds, hears rhymes and beginning sounds, knows some sight words, and enjoys being read to.

Math

Counts (often to 100), recognizes and writes numbers to ~20, compares more/less, names basic shapes, and sees patterns.

Writing

Writes their name, forms many letters, and uses drawing and early “invented” spelling to express ideas.

Social-emotional

Separates from home, shares and takes turns, follows classroom routines, manages feelings (mostly), and makes friends.

Watch for

Persistent trouble with letters/sounds, speech that's hard to understand, ongoing separation anxiety, or social/attention struggles — ask about a screening.

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