

GUIDELINES FOR KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Developed by Erna Furman
From What Nursery School Teachers Ask Us About

The Ability to Grasp and Master New Experiences

- When faced with a new situation, can your child take an interest in it, even if some of his or her feelings are negative?
- Can your child listen to and absorb some of the adults' attempts to prepare the child for a new experience?
- Can your child ask questions about a new situation?
- Can your child compare a new situation with a familiar one, noting similarities and differences?

This is the model for much of the other learning tasks that your child will face at school:

1. Preparing for a task
2. Building on the familiar
3. Identifying new elements
4. Integrating the new and familiar elements

→ Children who are easily overwhelmed by anxiety in new situations will benefit from extra preparation for entering kindergarten.

Bodily Independence:

1. Self-feeding with age-appropriate use of silverware, etc.
2. Independence in toileting: no longer requires adult reminders and assistance.
3. Avoidance of common dangers.
4. Appropriate self-defense: ability to protest and ask for adult help.
5. Ability to recognize, differentiate and label forms of discomfort, and to ask for help with them:
 - Can your child differentiate and label feelings such as tired, hungry, hurt, and sick?
 - Can your child identify body parts and link them to feelings? (“My ear hurts” rather than “I don’t feel good”)?

Care of One’s Clothes and Belongings:

- Can your child recognize and keep track of her belongings?
- Can she remember what she has brought to school?
- Can she ask a teacher for help in taking care of some items?

→ Children who don’t recognize their possessions, keep track of them, and take care of them may need extra help in preparing and getting organized for the kindergarten environment. The awareness of clothing and possessions is usually linked to an interest in learning to dress independently, and it is more important than any specific skills (such as shoe-tying or using zippers).

GUIDELINES FOR KINDERGARTEN READINESS (continued)

Can Your Child Maintain an Appropriate Teacher-Pupil Relationship?

For preschoolers, relationships with parent, babysitters, or even nursery school teachers tend to be global. Children look to them for fulfillment of all their needs. Kindergarten marks the beginning of more specialized relationships, in which the main purpose of the teacher is to help your child to learn.

- Is your child able to derive pleasure from sharing in learning activities with the teacher, or does he need to have that sense of closeness primarily through demanding physical contact and exclusive individual attention?

Peer Relationships

- Is your child able to be reciprocal in peer relationships?
- Will he take turns?
- Will she conform to the roles of a game?
- In fantasy play, will she compromise on her ideas in order to let the “story” work satisfactorily for other children?
- Is your child beginning to show some signs of true friendship?
- Does he show some concerns for the feelings of others?

This ability is rarely full developed at this age. Don't expect too much of your child!

Is Your Child's Style of Play Approaching Kindergarten Level?

- Does your child enjoy play that is in the service of skills acquisition and role-playing rather than simpler forms of comfort (e.g., cuddling with a blanket or teddy bear)?
- Can he modify wishes and accept some frustration?
- Can she accept an alternative or partial substitute for something she wants?
- Can she delay gratification for a while?
- Can he work hard at a task in anticipation of the gratification of mastery?
- Can he relinquish a pleasurable activity when the schedule demands it?

Acquisition of inner controls requires enough language mastery to begin to “talk to oneself” about one's wishes and their relationship to the demands of reality.

Inner controls also depend upon a certain degree of conscience.

At this age, conscience is rarely well-developed. However, your child needs to begin to internalize such ideals as kindness and patience. Then your child will derive pleasure from the approximation of those ideals.

Very few children enter kindergarten with all of these areas fully mastered – and very few will have developed none of them.

- The most important thing is to see a strong tendency toward mastery in these areas.
- If that tendency is not there, your child may need more time to prepare for kindergarten – and more adult help in facilitating his maturational processes.