

# Starting School

## Tips for Parents and Carers

Is your child due to start school in September? This can be a tricky time for parents as well as children, so here are some ideas for ways in which you can both be ready for this important step. Remember, school readiness is much more about emotional, social and practical preparation rather than academic work. As well as the ideas below, this pack contains further activities and resources that may be helpful.

### Emotional and social preparation

- Attend any welcome days the school is holding and make sure you and your child meet the new teacher and any other key staff.
- If the school runs a home visit programme, take them up on it. These are a great way for you and your child to meet school staff in your own home.
- If your child attends a nursery or preschool setting, talk to them about what they are doing to help with school transition.
- Attend any summer events your child's new school may be holding, such as a Sports Day or Summer Fair – take every opportunity to bring your child back to the school so they become more familiar with it.
- Talk regularly about the excitement of starting school and about what your child's expectations, fears and worries may be.
- Read some books about starting school – try Twinkl's [Starting School Book List](#)
- Keep in touch over the summer with any children you know who will be in your child's class – arrange a couple of play dates if possible.
- Model good social skills for your child, for example, smiling, making eye contact, sharing, being helpful and kind. Encourage them to practise these skills with you, other family members and friends.
- Talk about problem solving, for example, what to do if we are hurt, worried or unhappy. Stress to your child the importance of never being afraid to ask for help or to let an adult know if something has happened that has made them unhappy.



### Practical preparation

- Have a special trip out to buy uniform and other things your child will need, such as a water bottle, shoes or a school bag.
- Label everything! Iron-on or sew-in name tapes are best, but if you choose to write on labels with a biro or marker, remember that this fades as the garment is washed.
- Make sure your child can go to the toilet independently, including pulling pants and trousers up and down and wiping themselves afterwards.
- Teach good handwashing habits. It's amazing how quickly nasty bugs can spread around a class.
- Help your child to use a knife and fork correctly and to drink from a cup without a lid. If your child will be having a packed lunch, make sure they are able to insert straws into juice boxes and open packets or yoghurt pots without help.
- Practise dressing and undressing independently. Children can get distressed if they are always the last person to be ready for PE, so the ability to change independently is really important. Choose uniform with simple fastenings that is easy to put on and take off.

### Academic preparation

- Don't try and force your child to learn their alphabet or numbers and so on unless they show a genuine interest in doing so. If you push them before they are ready you risk turning them off learning.
- Teach your child to pay attention, listen well and respond appropriately. The best way to do this is by talking. Talk about everything, for example, what you can see on a day out, what you have just read in a book, the plans you have made for tomorrow, what you did yesterday.
- Read to and with your child every day. Encourage a love of books, and make sure your child knows how to handle a book, that pages turn from right to left and that the print on the page is what tells the story.
- Help your child to recognise their own name. Write it on pieces of card or paper, using a capital for the initial and lower case for the other letters (e.g. 'Poppy' not 'POPPY' or 'poppy'). Hide the papers around the room for your child to find. Each time they find one, they have to tell you what it says. Next, put the name card with some other words or names and see if your child can find their name.
- You can also help your child to write their own name. Again, they should practise doing this using a capital initial and lower case for the remaining letters. Give them the name card and let them have a go at copying what they see. If appropriate, gently guide them to form the letters correctly, but don't worry if they don't at this stage. They can write with a pen, pencil, paintbrush, or with their finger in sand, shaving foam or on a steamy window! See how many different ways they can find to write their name.
- If your child is keen, learn to recite the alphabet using the alphabet song, sung to the tune of 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'.
- In school your child will begin to learn the sounds made by the letters of the alphabet, so if they are keen to move on you can talk about these, perhaps using an alphabet poster or frieze.
- Practise counting objects during games, tidy up time, baking activities and so on. Encourage your child to touch or move each object and say the number name as they count. If your child is keen, you can move onto recognising the numbers from 1 to 10, perhaps using flashcards or a number game.

In this pack you'll find lots of lovely games and activities that you can do with your child to help them prepare for school. Don't feel you have to work through them all, you know your child best, so pick the ones that suit their needs.

Once your child has started school, have a look at '[The First Few Weeks of School](#)' Activity Pack for more activities and ideas to support the crucial first few weeks.