



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime



Next Up...

KINDERGARTEN!

The move to kindergarten is a big change for the whole family. Here are some tips for making this transition a little easier.

Use pretend play to prepare.

Take turns being the parent, child, and teacher. Talk about the morning and afternoon routine so that your child knows what to expect. Act out daily activities, like saying good-bye, getting on the bus, reading stories, and sitting at a desk.

Read books about kindergarten.

There are many books about starting school available from the public library. Share a few with your child over the summer. Talk about the story and how the characters are feeling. Ask how your child is feeling. See what questions they have.

Practice self-help skills.

These skills include zipping/unzipping their coat, putting on a backpack, fastening their shoes, and sitting “criss-cross applesauce.” If your child is bringing lunch, make sure they can open all their lunch box containers independently.

Play at your child’s new school.

Visit your child’s new school together. Play on the school playground over the summer. Explain how your child will get to school and how they will come home. These visits increase your child’s confidence.

Listen to your child’s worries.

Explain that it’s okay to feel happy, sad, excited, scared, or worried about a big change. Share a time when you started something new and how you felt.



Notice nonverbal messages.

Your child may not be able to explain how they are feeling. They may share their worry by being clingy, very quiet, having tantrums, or acting more “babyish.” It’s normal to be confused by these changes. Offer extra cuddles and be patient with them.

Start an earlier bedtime.

Children often go to bed later over the summer. Help your child adjust to their new bedtime starting about 2 weeks before the first day. Being well-rested helps children feel better on their first day.

Keep it positive.

Kindergarten is a big change for adults, too. Attend your child’s school orientation if they have one. Find out the best way to contact your child’s school when you have questions.

Your child will pick up on their family members’ feelings. It is normal for you to feel worried or sad on the first day. Try not to show this to your child. Say a quick, upbeat good-bye and reassure your child that all will be well. You can share your own feelings with the adults around you, away from your child.

Think about creating a special goodbye routine.

You can give your child a kiss on the palm to “hold” all day long. Or you can sing a special song together while you wait for the bus. Goodbye routines can be comforting to children.

Have more questions?

Talk to your child’s healthcare provider or one of the professionals supporting your family.

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