



10 classroom survival skills to teach your children before they go to school...

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Kindergarten readiness is not only about identifying numbers and letters. Although many children starting preschool or kindergarten can recite the alphabet, print numbers and letters and count to 10, there are other skills necessary to survive in a classroom.

A child who has had opportunities to be independent, to solve problems, to lose games gracefully and to wait for a turn patiently, will feel more confident and successful in the classroom or in any group experience.

1. Teach your children to be independent

Ease out of tying laces, buttoning jackets, and doing other personal care jobs for your children the year before they enter kindergarten. This may slow you down but teachers with 15 -20 students do not have the time or hands to do these jobs for all their students. Independent children get out the door faster and have more recess time.

Each task children learn, helps their days go more smoothly.

Here is a short list of some of the things children struggle with for the first few months of class:

- Opening lids on plastic food and drink containers or packaged foods
- Peeling oranges or eating whole apples or pears
- Knowing what to eat for snack and what to save for lunch (full day kindergarten)
- Using scissors - teach safety first, then begin with stiffer paper and good quality child's scissors
- Using a glue stick
- Folding and packing papers into their backpacks
- Hanging their jackets on hooks
- Opening heavy outside doors
- Changing from outside to inside shoes
- Taking off or putting on sweatshirts or sweaters if they get too hot or cold

Knowing how to manage these little things helps kindergarten students to feel more capable in the classroom.



2. Train your kids to listen and follow directions

Train your kids to listen and follow directions with household activities. Say, "I want you to take these dirty clothes and put them in the blue laundry basket. Can you repeat that back to me?" As the child succeeds following one or two steps, add more.

Teach your children to focus by requiring them to finish and clean up one activity before starting another. Sometimes children need prompts to spend more time on an activity. "Have you tried pressing these items into the modeling clay? Look at the different designs you can make." Give them 2 choices when starting a new activity. "Would you like to paint first or would you like to use the modeling clay first?"

3. Teach children to wait

Some parents are so delighted by their children they tend to place them on a pedestal. There is a fine balance to affirming that your child is unique and wonderful and imparting a sense of self-importance and cultivating a demanding attitude.

Children who are used to getting their every need met immediately may have a hard time in school where children are required to wait for many things and may be the last to get a turn at an activity. As silly as it seems, set up situations where it is Daddy or Mommy's turn to be first.

In a busy school setting, a teacher does not have time to reason with each child in the class. Let your child experience the word, "No", without explaining or reasoning with them.

4. Encourage your children to be problem solvers

Teach your children to be problem solvers. When your children come whining to you with a problem, pay them a penny or a nickel for each problem they can solve themselves. Often children get into the habit of expecting adults to fix all the difficulties in their life.

"I'm bored or I can't find a pencil" are examples of problems that most children can solve with a little effort and a change of mindset. Having practice and confidence in problem solving will go a long way in the classroom. I used to tell my own kids that they were problem solving detectives and their job was to identify the problem and then find a solution to it. "You say you are bored. How many things can you think of to do so you would not be bored anymore?"



5. Teach children to lose gracefully

Classroom readiness includes knowing how to lose. When playing games don't always let your children win. When they get to school they won't receive this advantage and children not accustomed to losing may pout or get angry and upset when playing with their peers. This does not help them make or keep friends.

6. Teach children to work

Encourage group readiness by expecting children to partake in family chores. Teach them that they are a vital part of the family structure and that their participation is necessary. Children need to feel needed and those used to helping will join in more readily when required to take part in classroom clean up and routines.

7. Teach children to identify and print their name

Put the child's name on the fridge or other places where he or she will see it on a regular basis. Use a capital for the first letter and then lower case letters. I have had tearful children who say, "That is not my name", when they see it above their coat hooks, as they had previously only seen their name printed with all capital letters.

Use cookie dough, modeling clay, a stick in the sand, paint and a brush, as well as paper and pencil to teach your children the letters in their name.

Most teachers ask kindergarten students to print their names on their papers. Children who already know how to print their names quickly move on to the next activity, while the ones who are still learning sit longer to practice this skill.

8. Teach children basic classroom hygiene

If kids are going to sneeze and there's no time to get a hanky, teach them cover their mouth and nose with the sleeve part of their upper arm. Also teach them to wash their hands before snack time and after using the toilet. They will have fewer chances of giving and getting germs.



9. Build children's classroom vocabulary

Show your child what the term "line up" means. For some children this is a mystery when they arrive in class. Unfortunately, lining up is part of classroom life. Going to the gym, to the library, or out for recess all require lining up quietly so teachers can count heads and children get out the doors safely. Other terms such as front, back, behind you, in front of you, forward, backward, may be used as children move around the classroom.

Teach the term "trace". Put a cup on top of a piece of paper and show them how to drag their pencil around it.

To increase children's confidence point out "capital" and "lowercase" letters and use terms such as "first, last, second" when sharing food. Use "rectangle, circle, triangle, square" throughout the day. "Pass me the rectangular pot holder please" or "Let's touch the triangle shapes" when reading a book.

10. Teach your child basic friendship skills

Making friends is not easy for all children. Those that know how to share, take turns, and express their feelings and wants are more successful than those without these basic skills.

Skills for making friends are an important part of kindergarten readiness.

- Teach children to be polite, to say thank you and please
- Teach them to listen to friends and to not interrupt repeatedly
- Give your children time to speak up for themselves when an adult talks to them
- Role-play; pretend you are part of a group of kids playing and show your child how to join in by saying, "What are you playing? How can I join the game?" rather than, "Can I play with you?"
- Some kids will call your child names, will hit your child, and will be pushy with your child. Don't convey to your children that they are being bullied; rather explain to them that there are children who have not learned how to behave. Role-play things to say and how to say them so your child will feel empowered, rather than feel like a victim.
- Role-play the power of "I" statements spoken loudly and firmly with your child. "I do not like it when you hit. Stop it now. I will share the blocks and give you a turn soon." Also role play how to get adult help if the other child will not listen.



Speak enthusiastically to your child about how they will make friends and do well at school. If you had unpleasant school experiences, don't assume your child will follow in your footsteps and don't let your past affect what you tell your child about school.

Free Friendship Book Handout...

For a free copy of "Making Friends One Day at a Time" student book to accompany the Kindergarten-lessons.com, Friendship Theme, sign up for the kindergarten-lesson.com monthly newsletter at <http://www.kindergarten-lessons.com/newsletter.html>.