

Preschool Transition Checklist

While it's true that children learn more in their first three years than ever again, it's between ages three and five that they acquire the skills necessary for school. As children's attention span, memory and language skills develop, they also become increasingly more sophisticated and social—qualities they'll need for preschool.

A child's preschool readiness depends more on individual personality and temperament—a combination of mental, physical and emotional traits—than "academic" abilities. Even so, our developmental checklist can help children get ready for this big step. This checklist is used as a guideline only and is not a definitive form of professional assessment.

Preschool readiness checklist

Social Skills

- Initiates and maintains independent play (for example, plays alone in the sandbox, or role-plays independently)
- Enjoys doing things on their own sometimes, such as reading, crafts or manipulative activities
- Enjoys participating in group activities
- Can express emotions, needs and requests
- Responds well to consistent routines, such as quiet time or naptime following lunch
- Anticipates what comes next during the day (for example, knows that naptime follows lunch)

Motor Skills

- Increases proficiency in gross motor skills, strength and balance, such as jumping in place, standing on one foot, running and kicking
- Develops gross motor coordination, such as to navigate around obstacles
- Rides tricycles
- Runs to kick a stationary ball
- Improves hand-eye coordination when playing with building blocks and simple puzzles
- Begins to improve pencil control by using fingers rather than the whole fist to grasp pencil and stylus
- Begins to show left/right-handedness

Reasoning & Concept Development

- Matches like objects, mainly identical objects, or matches objects by shape and color
- Develops object permanence and understands that objects continue to exist even when out of sight

- Shows interests in tinkering with objects by taking things apart and putting them back together
- Explores with elements of nature, such as sand and water
- Remembers short sequences of events of 2 to 3 steps

Language Skills

- Uses language to communicate with others for a variety of purposes (for example, describing something, making requests, greeting someone, etc.)
- Speaks clearly to be understood by others
- Uses accepted language and communication styles (for example, using polite manners, using appropriate volume and tone)
- Tells simple stories
- Understands words for common categories (for example, toys, food, clothes)
- Uses sentences with two phrases or concepts

Reading

- Holds a book properly and turns pages
- Understands that words convey the message in a story
- Recognizes the first letter of their own name
- Knows some letter names
- Knows the main characters in familiar stories
- Enjoys reading books with others

Writing

- Holds a writing tool with a fist or finger grasp
- Draws with a variety of tools (crayons, pens, pencils)
- Scribble-writes in a linear fashion
- Makes marks and refer to them as "my name"

Math

- Identifies some shapes such as circle, square and triangle
- Understands and explores empty containers and full containers
- Recognizes and matches small quantities to the number words 1, 2 and 3
- Shows interest in numbers and recites some number words
- Can count along with help, although might make mistakes
- Uses some size words, such as "many"
- Uses words such as "same as" to make comparisons
- Shows interests in patterns and sequences
- Classifies or sorts objects into simple groups (such as by colors and size)

- Understands the order of the day, and begins to use some time words such as "morning" and "night"

Science

- Asks questions about objects, events and animals observed in their environment
- Considers and offers explanations of how things might work
- Shows interest in different animals and the sounds they make
- Uses descriptive terms such as "fast" and "slow," "hot" and "cold"

Creative Arts & Music

- Begins to use a variety of art tools such as crayon, construction paper and colored pencils
- Knows a few color words
- Drawings have basic resemblance to objects and people
- Articulates what he/she is drawing
- Likes to imitate sounds and rhythm; might have a favorite song
- Uses realistic toys in pretend play or to imitate household routines
- Engages in dramatic play with others to act out simple play scripts, such as playing house

Social Studies

- Recognizes common features of the home and neighborhood, such as trees, houses and streets
- Shows interests in familiar people such as siblings, family members and friends
- Shows interests in common jobs and professions such as firefighter, doctor and nurse

Self-Help Skills

- Shows motivation to get dressed independently
- Demonstrates the ability to go to the bathroom with some assistance or independently, no longer using diapers
- Is able to feed him/herself using appropriate utensils, drink from a regular cup, and can remain in a chair independently until finished eating