

A Parent's Guide to Universal Prekindergarten

Helping you understand what to expect in pre-k is crucial. More than 85 percent of the brain is developed before the age of 5. The preschool years are the time in which the brain begins to maximize efficiency.¹ The most important goal of pre-k is to help your child develop the knowledge, skills, and approaches to learning needed to be ready for school. Below are typical pre-k activities with suggestions of what you can do at home to reinforce and extend your child's learning. Working together, we can give your child a great start for school.

Gross and Fine Motor

In Pre-k Children play outside every day, weather permitting. Playing outside helps develop children's muscles, improves coordination, and reinforces healthy habits. The playground is a great place for children to learn social skills such as taking turns, talking to others, making friends, and getting along.



At Home Take your child to the playground to explore all kinds of movements. Play outdoor games like hopscotch, jump rope, red light, green light, and drawing with sidewalk chalk. Play games that you played when you were a child.

Read Aloud

In Pre-k Children listen to stories every day. They ask questions, learn new words, and discuss different parts of books. During this time, children develop listening, reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills. They get excited to hear what will happen next and what they will learn each time the teacher turns the page.



At Home Read different kinds of books with your child. Visit the library and take out storybooks and non-fiction books about animals, people, places, and things. Let your child take "picture walks" by telling you what the story is about by looking at the pictures. Ask questions about what may come next or why a person did something in the story.

Center/ Choice Time

In Pre-k Children make decisions about where they will explore, discover, and learn each day. They learn independence by working by themselves or with other children during center/choice time activities. They read and write, build, cut, paint, and pretend. They practice planning, doing and reviewing what they did in centers. Building these skills is critical in a child's social-emotional development.



¹ National Research Council and Institute of Medicine.2000, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

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At Home Allow your child to make decisions about what to wear to school, which game to play, or which color towel to use. Ask your child to make a plan (e.g. decide what equipment they will play on in the playground or which games they want to play with a friend) and execute it. Then, help them reflect on how it went by talking about it with them and asking them how they think their plans went.

Class Meeting

In Pre-k Children come together and become a community of learners, explorers, and friends. They discuss the plan for the day. They build language skills by listening and responding to stories as well as singing songs and reciting nursery rhymes. They practice counting, look for patterns, and explore other math concepts.



At Home Sing songs, share stories, and recite poems that you learned as a child. Tell stories about your family and what you did when you were young. Talk about the weather each day and why people wear different clothes depending on the weather.

Small Group

In Pre-k Children spend focused time with the teacher and other students when they are in small groups. They develop new knowledge and practice what they learn with support from the teacher and other students.



At Home Spend time with your child one-on-one when possible. Have conversations about what they learned at school. During bath time, talk about the day, favorite activities and friends.

Meal Time



In Pre-k Children have a role in getting ready for meal time. Meals are often set up in family style so children can serve themselves and continue learning social skills as they engage in rich conversations during meals. Teachers often eat with children, modeling manners and conversation.

At Home Develop routines for meal times. Let your child prepare for meal time by setting the table. Sit at the table and allow your child to serve himself. Let him help with clean up by clearing the table, putting dishes in the sink or placing utensils in drawers.

Pre-k is the first step toward preparing your child for college and future careers.

Brought to you by The Office of Early Childhood Education

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