

10 kindergarten readiness skills to focus on.

1. Writing

- Help your child practice writing letters, especially the letters in his name.
- Teach your child how to write his name with an uppercase first letter and the remaining letters in lowercase.
- Write in shaving cream in the bathtub, salt or sugar in a cake pan or in finger paint to make practicing more fun and multisensory.

2. Letter Recognition

- Play games to help your child recognize the letters of the alphabet.
- Play hide and seek with refrigerator magnets.
- Play games with your child with flashcards, use them to play a game of alphabet go fish.

3. Beginning Sounds

- Make your child aware of the sound that each letter makes.
- Find items around the house that begin with the same sound and identify the letter that makes each sound.
- Overemphasize the first sound in words to help your child hear the individual sounds in words.

4. Number Recognition and Counting

- Count throughout the day (for example, the crackers he is eating for snack or the socks that you take out of the dryer).
- Point out numbers you see in your environment and have your child name them (for example, the numbers found on food boxes or street signs).

5. Shapes and Colors

- Help your child recognize “shades” of colors- talk about blue, light blue, navy blue etc.
- Help your child recognize more difficult shapes such as diamonds and rectangles by showing him how to draw them on paper and cut them out.
- Play games in which your child finds objects of particular colors and shapes around the house or in the neighborhood when you are out for a walk.

6. Fine Motor Skills

- Give your child several different writing options (colored pencils, crayons or markers) to help keep him interested in writing and drawing.
- Playing with play dough is a fun way to strengthen the muscles of the hand that will be used for writing.

7. Cutting

- Purchase a good pair of child-safe scissors and let your child practice.
- Give him old magazines or newspapers to cut up, or allow him to make a collage of the things he likes by cutting them from magazines and gluing them to a piece of paper.
- Cutting play dough is also fun for children.

8. Reading Readiness

- Run your finger under the words as you read to your child to help him learn that words go from left to right and top to bottom.
- Play games with rhyming words to help your child hear similar sounds in words. For example, as you are going up the stairs, name one word that rhymes with cat for each step as you go up.

9. Attention and Following Directions

- Read lots of stories with your child and work up to reading longer chapter books, one chapter each night or as long as he remains interested and focused.
- Give your child two and three step directions. For example: "put on your pajamas, brush your teeth and pick a book to read."
- Play Simon Says with two or three step directions. For example: "Simon Says jump up and down and shout hooray."

10. Social Skills

- Give your child opportunities to interact with other children at the library, church or Little Gym, swim lessons or play dates.
- Teach your child how to express her feelings if he doesn't like something.
- Role-play different situations he might experience on the playground or at school. Help him find solutions for typical problems he might encounter.