

Getting Ready for Kindergarten

1 Doing It Myself

- ☐ Put a coat on and take it off without help
- ☐ Start a zipper for them, then let them pull it up
- ☐ Practice Velcro shoes first, then buttons and snaps
- ☐ Pull socks on and get the heels straight
- ☐ Work out which shoe goes on which foot
- ☐ Swing a backpack on and off alone
- ☐ Hang the backpack on a hook by the door
- ☐ Pick their own coat and lunchbox out of a pile
- ☐ Pack everything back into the bag when they're done
- ☐ Carry a full lunchbox or tray with two hands

2 Bathroom Business

- ☐ Practice saying "I need to use the bathroom" out loud
- ☐ Notice the urge and go, before anyone reminds them
- ☐ Manage clothes down and back up without help
- ☐ Wipe on their own
- ☐ Remember the flush
- ☐ Soap, rinse, dry — the whole hand-washing routine
- ☐ Tell a grown-up right away if there's an accident
- ☐ Show them the spare clothes tucked in the backpack

3 Lunchbox Skills

- ☐ Do a practice lunch at home with the real lunchbox
- ☐ Open a yogurt, a pouch, or a squeeze tube
- ☐ Peel a string cheese, a banana, or a clementine
- ☐ Pull open a zip-top bag
- ☐ Unwrap a granola bar
- ☐ Twist a water bottle open and shut
- ☐ Practice using a fork and spoon at dinner
- ☐ Reach for a napkin without being told

- ☐ Throw away the trash and pack up the leftovers
- ☐ Time a lunch and see if they finish in about twenty minutes
- ☐ Drink from a water fountain at the park

4 Getting Along With Other Kids

- ☐ Head to the playground and join a game that's already going
- ☐ Rehearse the words: "Can I play?"
- ☐ Play out what to do when the answer is no
- ☐ Share a toy on purpose, even briefly
- ☐ Take a turn, then hand it over
- ☐ Wait while someone else goes first
- ☐ Ask for something instead of grabbing it
- ☐ Find something for angry hands to do besides hitting
- ☐ Point out when another child looks sad
- ☐ Practice a real apology, not just the word
- ☐ Play a simple board game with rules

5 Big Feelings

- ☐ Practice quick goodbyes: a hug, a wave, and off you go
- ☐ Work on winding down within a few minutes of getting upset
- ☐ Put names to feelings — mad, sad, worried, excited
- ☐ Try again after something doesn't work the first time
- ☐ Get used to hearing "not right now" and "all done"
- ☐ Lose a game on purpose sometimes and talk it through
- ☐ Change the plan at the last minute and see how it goes
- ☐ Teach them to ask for a hug, a break, or a quiet minute
- ☐ Pick one calm-down trick: deep breath, count to five, squeeze hands

6 Listening and Following Along

- ☐ Call their name and wait for eyes, not just ears
- ☐ Give two-step directions and let them do both
- ☐ Say something to the whole room and see if they catch it
- ☐ Ask for a clean-up twice, then stop repeating yourself
- ☐ Build up to sitting on one spot for ten or fifteen minutes

- ☐ Practice waiting a beat before speaking
- ☐ Play a game where hands go up instead of voices
- ☐ Walk in a line behind someone on the way to the car
- ☐ Play freeze: everyone stops the moment a grown-up says so
- ☐ Give a five-minute warning before switching activities

7 Talking and Being Understood

- ☐ Let them order their own food or ask someone at the store a question
- ☐ Practice their first and last name out loud
- ☐ Learn a grown-up's real first and last name
- ☐ Rehearse asking a teacher for help
- ☐ Ask about their day and wait for a real answer
- ☐ Push past one-word answers with "tell me more"
- ☐ Teach the phrase "can you say that again?"
- ☐ Work please and thank you into the daily routine
- ☐ Practice saying how they feel instead of showing it with their body

8 Books, Letters, and Squiggles

- ☐ Read a picture book all the way to the end, every day
- ☐ Let them hold the book and turn the pages
- ☐ Point at the words while you read
- ☐ Write their name on things and see if they spot it
- ☐ Hunt for the letters of their name on signs and cereal boxes
- ☐ Let them write their name — backwards letters totally fine
- ☐ Play a rhyming game in the car
- ☐ Say a word slowly and listen for the first sound
- ☐ Ask them to tell you the story from the pictures
- ☐ Sing the alphabet song on repeat
- ☐ Reread the same favorite book as many times as they want

9 Numbers, Shapes, and Figuring Things Out

- ☐ Count out loud together to ten, then to twenty
- ☐ Count real things by touching them one at a time
- ☐ Spot numbers on doors, buses, and price tags

- ☐ Ask "how many?" at every opportunity
- ☐ Compare two piles and ask which has more
- ☐ Name shapes on the walk around the block
- ☐ Name colors on cars, clothes, and food
- ☐ Sort the laundry or the Legos by color and size
- ☐ Build up to a twenty-four-piece puzzle
- ☐ Start a pattern with blocks and let them continue it
- ☐ Pause a story and ask what happens next
- ☐ Set the table together, one fork per person

10 Hands and Fingers

- ☐ Swap the fist grip for a finger grip on a crayon
- ☐ Color in a picture, roughly inside the lines
- ☐ Draw a person with a head, body, arms, and legs
- ☐ Copy a circle, then a cross, then a square
- ☐ Cut along a drawn line with kid scissors
- ☐ Use a glue stick on the paper, not on everything
- ☐ Thread beads, pasta, or a lacing card
- ☐ Build something with small blocks or Legos
- ☐ Get the cap on and off a marker
- ☐ Turn doorknobs and faucets without help
- ☐ Tear open a wrapper alone

11 Wiggly Bodies

- ☐ Run, stop, and change direction at the park
- ☐ Jump forward with two feet together
- ☐ Hop a few times on one foot
- ☐ Balance on one foot while brushing teeth
- ☐ Take the stairs one foot per step
- ☐ Throw and catch a big ball
- ☐ Climb playground equipment while you watch from a bench
- ☐ Pedal a trike or a bike
- ☐ Sit through a whole meal without leaving the chair

12 Getting Out the Door

- ☐ Shift wake-up time earlier a couple of weeks before school starts
- ☐ Get dressed with one reminder instead of ten
- ☐ Set out clothes the night before
- ☐ Eat breakfast without a negotiation
- ☐ Get shoes and coat on when asked
- ☐ Move bedtime early enough for ten to twelve hours of sleep
- ☐ Try a whole morning with no screen
- ☐ Walk, drive, or ride the bus route a few times

13 School-Day Know-How

- ☐ Talk through who to go to when something goes wrong
- ☐ Practice saying "I feel sick" or "I hurt myself"
- ☐ Talk about staying with the group
- ☐ Cover what to do if someone they don't know approaches them
- ☐ Explain exactly what happens at the end of the day
- ☐ Walk around the school building and playground before day one
- ☐ Learn the teacher's name
- ☐ Practice spotting a familiar face in a busy room
- ☐ Learn a grown-up's phone number, or tuck it in the backpack