

# Kindergarten

## Preparing Your Family for the First Day

---

**The BIG day is coming** - perhaps more quickly than you would like. Your child is entering kindergarten and the entire family is excited but anxious. Understandably so: entry into school brings major changes for both parents and child.

Children react differently to the prospect of kindergarten. Some are excited, looking forward to joining the "big kids," while some are frightened and others are not aware of the change that is about to occur.

In any event, it is important to recognize and acknowledge your child's feelings. By helping your child cope with those feelings, you relieve some of your own.

### Preparing Your Child

- ☺ Take your child with you for registration. Then he or she meets the teacher, sees the building and the classroom. Ask to take a photo of your child with the teacher. Display it at home. A familiar face is a comfort on the first day.
- ☺ Many schools arrange for new children to spend time in the kindergarten class in June. Take advantage of this. It's another chance for your child and the teacher to get to know each other and for your child to see school in action.
- ☺ Find out if the teacher you meet at registration will be the one teaching your child's class in September. This is usually the case, but not always. If there is a change, call the school in late August to arrange for your child to meet the new teacher before the first day.
- ☺ Arrange for your child to play with some of his or her classmates during the summer so that he will see some familiar faces on the first day.
- ☺ Establish school day routines such as bedtime, breakfast, and dressing a week or two in advance, so that your child does not have to cope with too many changes all at once.
- ☺ Walk the route back and forth to school several times. Explore the school yard, play on the playground equipment, show your child where he will enter and be picked up from school.

### Preparing Yourself

While children worry about day-to-day concerns like "what do I do if I need the bathroom?" or "where are you while I'm at school?", we parents fret about other issues. When does my child learn to read? How does this teacher discipline children? What about homework? These concerns do not go away after the first day of school. They are part of the reality of parenting school age children. It is therefore important to maintain communication with the school. One way to do this is to become involved with your child's school at the very beginning.

- ✓ Take advantage of the registration time to ask questions about kindergarten or the school in general.
- ✓ Find out if the school has a Parent Teacher Association or other form of parent group. Many such groups welcome incoming kindergarten parents to their Spring meetings.
- ✓ Ask about opportunities to volunteer in the classroom.
- ✓ Don't wait for interview time to express concerns. Contact the teacher as needed to discuss your child.
- ✓ On the big day itself, take a big breath and adopt a matter-of-fact approach. If you are nervous and allow your child to see it, then your child may become apprehensive. Often it is the parents who are scared of the first day at school, rather than the children.
- ✓ When that final moment comes, kiss your child goodbye, make plans for pickup and leave.

**Tears are not unusual. The teacher will deal with the children - but I'm afraid you are on your own.** Pat yourself on the back - You've brought your child to the next stage in life. We all raise our children to let them go, no matter how hard it is.