

Stepping into Kindergarten

A School Readiness Guide
for Families

Fairfax County

O **F** **C** Office for Children

Department of Family Services • Office for Children
12011 Government Center Parkway, Suite 920
Fairfax, Virginia 22035-1102
Telephone: 703-324-8000 • TTY 711
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc



A Fairfax County, VA
publication.
Printed 6/2014.



Fairfax County is committed to providing equal access to all its citizens and activities. In compliance with applicable law, reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request. Call 703-324-8000 or TTY 711.

Stepping Into Kindergarten!

Soon your child will start kindergarten. This guide will give you some ideas about what you can do to help assure your child is ready to “Step into Kindergarten.”

It will also show you various ways you can lay the foundation for kindergarten and it can connect you with school and community resources to help build your child’s kindergarten readiness skills.

Being ready for school is much more than knowing the alphabet and being able to count to ten. A ready child is healthy, curious about the world, interactive with others, and has a sense of self-control. You already do many things that are preparing your child for success in school and helping her to be ready for the first day of kindergarten.



Stepping into Kindergarten

A School Readiness Guide
for Families



Table of Contents

Good Communication Begins at Home	4
Routines Help Prepare Your Child to be Ready for School	5
Getting Along with Others	6
Building Healthy Bodies	7
Connecting with Community Resources	8
Transitioning to Kindergarten	9
A Seasonal Calendar of School Readiness Experiences	10
Helpful Resources	14
Websites for Kids	14

You are an important Part of the Picture

Good Communication Begins at Home

In kindergarten, children will talk with others throughout the day. They will need to use language to interact and solve problems. By talking with your child, you are building these skills.

Many children starting kindergarten interact with others by:

- Communicating their needs and wants.
- Describing different people, places, objects and events.
- Sharing something that happened during the day or the day before.
- Engaging in cooperative play.

Building good communication skills begins at home.

Can your child tell you how he feels during a thunderstorm?

Can she tell you about the game she played with her friend?

Can he use colors, shapes and sizes to describe his favorite toy?

When you have conversations, you are building communication skills that will help them in kindergarten:

- Ask questions about what happened at the park or on a visit with a friend.
- Ask about what happened first, next and last at an outing.
- Include details that describe objects to build language, math and science skills.

Routines Help Prepare Your Child to be Ready for School

Every family has routines that include sleeping, waking, eating meals, going to the market, doing the family laundry or going to the library.

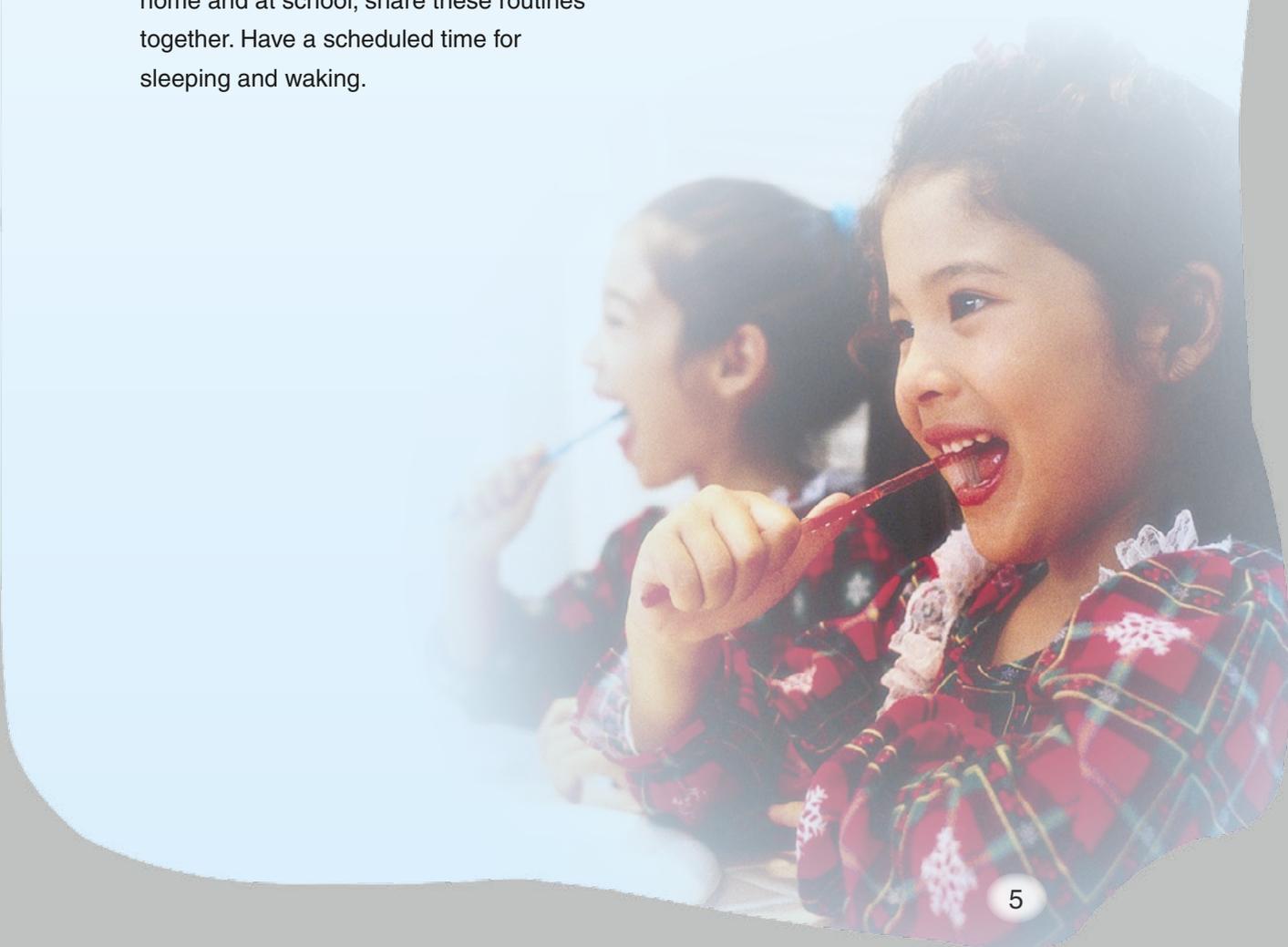
By establishing and following routines at home, your child will be prepared for the routines she will follow in kindergarten.

Predictable routines can help children at home and at school; share these routines together. Have a scheduled time for sleeping and waking.

The routines that you follow at home every day will help your child follow routines at school.

Can your child tell you what happens after breakfast?

Does she know when bedtime is?



Getting Along with Others

Getting along with others is a skill that makes the transition to kindergarten easier for children, parents and teachers. Children who talk about their feelings and events in their day are generally more comfortable sharing their thoughts with teachers and others.

Children who can get along with others know how to:

- Play cooperatively and take turns.
- Share toys and attention.
- Solve problems with words.
- Respect people and property.
- Ask for help.
- Greet others politely.
- Introduce themselves to new friends.



Building Healthy Bodies

Hanging from the monkey bars develops strong muscles children use when writing in school.

Sleep

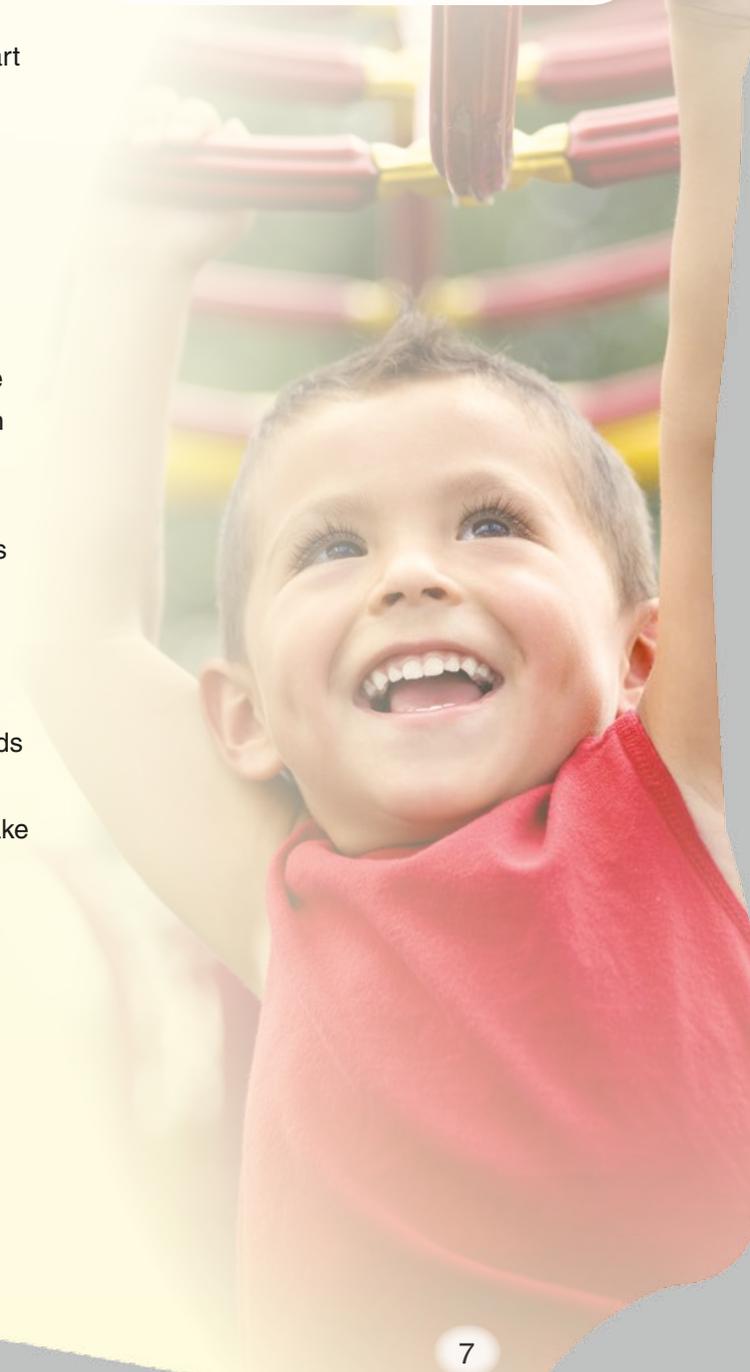
A well-rested child will be off to a good start each day.

Exercise

An active brain is more ready to learn. Making regular physical activity a part of your family routine plays a role in getting your child ready for a day of learning in kindergarten. Meeting other families at the park gives your child a chance to play with friends and enjoy pretend play. Playing on the elementary school playground will support an easy transition for your child as he will be comfortable there before school starts.

Good Nutrition

Eating healthy food is vital to growing minds and bodies. In kindergarten, your child will be able to bring lunch from home or to make his own choices for lunch in the cafeteria. Allowing your child to make snack and meal choices helps prepare her to make independent choices at school.



Connecting with Community Resources

Some of these resources in Fairfax County are:

Fairfax County Public Libraries
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library

Each library branch has a special section of children's books designed to build your child's imagination and early literacy skills. Up to 50 books can be borrowed for three weeks at a time. Special activities and story times are offered throughout the year and there is a Summer Reading Program available for preschool and school-age children. The monthly "Ready to Read" newsletter available on the library website provides great ideas for books to read to your child.

Fairfax County Park Authority
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/living/parks

Fairfax County has numerous parks of varying sizes. Two may be of special interest: Clemjontri Park in McLean and Frying Pan Farm Park in Herndon.

You can find information about enjoyable classes for preschoolers in "Parktakes" magazine, found online or at your public library.

Clemjontri is a two-acre playground divided into four outdoor "rooms." It is accessible to all children, including those with physical disabilities. It has a carousel and picnic pavilion. The address is 6317 Georgetown Pike, McLean, VA 22101, 703-388-2807, TTY 711.

Frying Pan Farm Park includes a replica of a 1920's farm, a carousel, hayrides, country store and Visitor's Center. Children can see a variety of farm animals and old farm equipment. Picnic tables and a playground are available. Frying Pan Farm Park is located at 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon, VA 20171, 703-437-9101, TTY 711.

Fairfax County Health Clinics
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd

The Fairfax County Health Department offers free school-required immunizations at five clinic locations. Hours are extended during the summer. Three of these locations also offer dental services* for children over 3 years old – an appointment is needed.

***Joseph Willard Health Center**

3750 Old Lee Highway
 Fairfax, VA 22030
 703-246-7100, TTY 711

***Herndon/Reston Office**

1850 Cameron Glen Dr. Suite 100
 Reston, VA 22090
 703-481-4242, TTY 711

***Mount Vernon Office**

8350 Richmond Hwy. Suite 233
 Alexandria, VA 22309
 703-704-5203, TTY 711

Annandale District Office

7611 Little River Turnpike
 Suite 400E (East Wing)
 Annandale, VA 22003
 703-534-8343, TTY 711

Springfield District Office

8136 Old Keene Mill Road
 The Cary Building Suite A100
 Springfield, VA 22152
 703-569-1031, TTY 711

Transitioning to Kindergarten

Every kindergarten class is different, but all kindergarten classes allow children to take part in whole group, small group and individual learning activities throughout the day. To the left is a sample kindergarten schedule.

Children will have an easier transition to kindergarten if they are able to:

- Play appropriately with another child.
- Recover from a disappointment.
- Find a place for themselves in an unfamiliar environment.
- Make decisions.
- Communicate so others will understand.
- Search for new knowledge.
- Take on challenges.

Time	Subject
9 a.m.	Networking
9:20 a.m.	Opening Meeting
9:35 a.m.	Language Arts
11:05 a.m.	Recess
11:20 a.m.	Lunch
11:50 a.m.	Quiet Time
12:20 p.m.	PE/Music
12:50 p.m.	Math
1:50 p.m.	Learning Centers Snack
2:20 p.m.	Social Studies Science
3:20 p.m.	Read Aloud
3:30 - 3:40 p.m.	Sharing / Dismissal



A Seasonal Calendar of School Readiness Experiences

In Virginia, children are eligible to attend kindergarten if their 5th birthday is on or before September 30. The following activities can be enjoyed together throughout the year before your child begins kindergarten.

Fall

- If your child attends a child care/ preschool program, talk with his teacher about the routines.
- Visit the library regularly with your child. Help her choose books to read over and over. Share the stories by reading and retelling them.
- Play the “One New Food” game. Have your child choose a new food to try each week. Focus on colorful fruits and vegetables and interesting ways to prepare them.
- Take family walks together to look for signs of fall.
- Search for squirrels burying nuts, geese flying overhead and leaves changing colors. Talk about the changes in the weather.
- Let your child experiment with markers, crayons and pencils to develop her writing skills. Frame her artwork, and hang it on the walls in your home.
- Teach your child to put on his own coat and practice buttoning and/or zipping.

Some great books for fall:

“A is for Autumn”
by Robert Maass

“Leaf Man” by Lois Ehlert

“It’s Fall!”
by Linda Glaser

“Sixteen Runaway Pumpkins”
by Dianne Ochiltree

“Dappled Apples”
by Jan Carr

“Turkey Trouble”
by Wendi Silvano

Winter

- Plan to attend a kindergarten readiness workshop in your community.
- Use the Fairfax County Public Schools Boundary Information System at <http://boundary.fcps.edu/boundary> to determine where your child will attend kindergarten and visit that elementary school.
- Begin to gather the documents you need to register your child for kindergarten. These include: proof of residency; birth certificate; and health and immunization records. Registration procedures and forms are available at www.fcps.edu by clicking “Quick Links” and selecting “Register for School,” or you can pick up a registration packet at any Fairfax County elementary school.
- Share simple tasks that build math skills, like: sorting and matching the socks on laundry day, finding three red apples at the market, guessing which weighs more - a can of soup or a bag of rice.
- Bundle up and spend some family time outdoors. Talk about the changes your child sees in the environment. Look for trees that have lost their leaves and ones that are still green. Look for berries and pine cones.

Some great books for winter:

“The Snowy Day”
Ezra Jack Keats

“The First Day of Winter” by
Denise Fleming

“Snowy, Blowy, Winter”
by Bob Raczka

“Owl Moon” by Jane Yolen

“Snowballs” by Lois Ehlert

“Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes” by Eric Litwin

- Talk with your child about favorite stories you have read together. Continue to check out new books from the library, but also look again at books you have already read. Good suggestions for books can be found in the public library’s “Ready to Read” newsletter available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library.



Spring

- Spring is a good time to start talking about kindergarten. Preschoolers do not have a good understanding of time and how long it will be until September arrives.
- Register early; complete all registration paperwork. Attend any kindergarten orientation programs that are scheduled at the elementary school, and schedule a visit with your child. Ask to see several kindergarten rooms.
- As you read books together, begin to help your child notice words that rhyme or start with the same sound. Playing rhyming or sound games while traveling or walking helps pass the time while building early literacy skills.
- Begin to look for the letters in her name on signs around the neighborhood and in books.

Some great books for Spring:

"It's Spring!"
by Linda Glaser

"UnderGROUND"
by Denise Fleming

"Let's Count"
by Tana Hoban

"So Many Circles, So Many Squares" by Tana Hoban

"Rosie's Walk"
by Pat Hutchins

"Color Farm"
by Lois Ehlert

- Encourage your child to use color, shape and size when describing objects and making choices at home and when looking at picture books from the library or home.
- Visit new places in your community. Talk about what happens at the fire or police station. Go to the post office. Ask your child questions about what he sees. Encourage him to ask about things he does not understand or wants to know more about.
- Help your child make a grocery list, and have her find those items at the store. She can copy the names of her favorite cereal or draw a picture of the fruit your family wants.
- Go to a farmer's market to explore new foods and talk with the farmers.

Summer

- Explore your neighborhood together; find new places to go and meet new people. Go on a picnic or visit a new park, a museum or the zoo. Talk about your experiences.
- Visit your child's elementary school throughout the summer. Plan play times on the playground, at parks, and at homes with other children who will attend the same school.
- Plan the place at home where you will keep your child's kindergarten supplies, such as her backpack and library books.
- Arrange an appointment with your pediatrician or health clinic before the first day of school.

Some great books for summer:

"Beetle Bop"
by Denise Fleming

"The Kissing Hand"
by Audrey Penn

"Wag a Tail" by Lois Ehlert

"Yoko Writes her Name"
by Rosemary Wells

"Actual Size"
by Steve Jenkins

"How Do Dinosaurs Go to School?" by Jane Yolen

"School Bus"
by Donald Crews

"Countdown to Kindergarten"
by Alison McGhee

Helpful Resources for Parents

PBS parents
www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids

School Readiness: What Teachers Expect. What Parents Can Do.
www.iidc.indiana.edu
(Go to Early Childhood Center, Promoting School Readiness, Products.)

Health and fitness, family life, school, safety tips
www.kidshealth.org/parent

Healthy eating
www.choosemyplate.gov/kids

Month-by-month guides to kindergarten readiness
www.blastofftok.org

Fairfax County Public Schools
www.fcps.edu

Great Websites for Kids

PBS kids
www.pbskids.org

Letters, numbers and reading skills
www.starfall.com

National Geographic
www.kids.nationalgeographic.com

National Wildlife Federation
www.nwf.org/Kids

Other Publications

Helping Your Child Love to Learn

Learn about early childhood development from birth to age 5. Discover activities families and educators can introduce to encourage growth in science, math, literacy, language, creative arts, social and emotional development, and health and physical development. Available at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc/docs/ffparentguideeng.pdf>



School Readiness Books for Early Childhood Professionals and Parents

The books in this guide can be used by early childhood professionals and parents as they prepare children for success in school and beyond. The books correspond to the "Early Learning Guidelines," which can be read online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc. Each of these books is available through the Fairfax County Public Library System. Available at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc/docs/school-readiness-booklist.pdf>.



It's Time to Register for Kindergarten!

是註冊就讀幼稚園的時候了！
如果您的孩子將於 9 月 30 日前
年滿 5 週歲，請聯絡您附近的
小學，以了解相關入學資訊並
取得註冊資料袋。

유치원에 등록하실 때입니다!
귀하의 자녀가 9월 30일
이전에 만 5세가 된다면 지금
주변의 초등학교에 연락하여
학교 정보 및 등록 서류에 대해
알아보십시오.

Đã đến lúc để đăng ký cho lớp
mẫu giáo!
Khi con em quý vị được 5 tuổi vào
ngày 30 tháng 9, thì đây là thời
điểm thích hợp để quý vị liên
lạc với trường tiểu học gần
khu vực của quý vị để biết
thêm thông tin và hồ sơ
ghi danh.

If your child will
be 5 years old by
September 30, now is
the time to contact
your neighborhood
elementary school for
information and the
registration packet.

Ha llegado el momento de inscribirse
para Kindergarten! Si su hijo va
a tener 5 años el 30 de setiembre
próximo, ahora es el momento de
ponerse en contacto con la escuela
primaria de su vecindario para
obtener información y el paquete de
inscripción.

”زمان ثبت نام برای مهد کودک است!“
اگر فرزند شما تا 30 سپتامبر، 5 ساله می شود، اکنون
زمان آن است که با دبستان محل خود تماس بگیرید
تا اطلاعات مورد نیاز و بسته ثبت نام را دریافت کنید.

”یہ کنڈرگارٹن میں اندراج کرانے کا وقت ہے!“
اگر 30 ستمبر تک یا اس سے قبل آپ کے بچے
کی عمر 5 سال ہو رہی ہے، تو وقت آگیا ہے کہ
آپ اپنے علاقے کے اسکول سے رابطہ کریں اور
معلومات اور داخلے کی تفصیلات طلب کریں

”لقد حان الوقت للتسجيل في رياض الأطفال“
إذا كان طفلك سيبلغ عمر 5 سنوات بحلول
30 سبتمبر، فقد حان الآن وقت الاتصال
بالمدرسة الابتدائية القريبة للحصول على
المزيد من المعلومات وحزمة
التسجيل الخاصة بها.



Find out how:
<http://boundary.fcps.edu>



Fairfax County



Office for Children

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc