

Kindergarten Readiness: The 10 Traits Successful Kids Have in Common, From A Kindergarten Teacher



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RAISE THE KIND OF PERSON YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW

Beginning kindergarten is a huge rite of passage that looms large for most children and their parents. Children are excited to join the world of older students who attend elementary school. Parents are often understandably emotional about their child's transition to formal schooling, and perhaps a bit nervous about their child's readiness for what will be required of them in the classroom. With kindergarten registration season approaching, parents may wonder how to best prepare their young children for entering kindergarten in a few months' time. As a kindergarten teacher, I'd like to share a few observations of children who successfully transition to school. Certain skills and dispositions make for a smooth transition and a successful kindergarten year for many children.

CHILDREN WHO DO WELL IN KINDERGARTEN ARE ONES WHO CAN:

- 1. Make choices.** Children will be given many opportunities in school to make choices. They will choose what to play on the playground. They will choose activities and books in the classroom. Children who have been given autonomy at home in developing preferences and making meaningful choices from limited options are able to transfer this skill to the school setting, thereby exerting confidence in making wise choices within the classroom setting.
- 2. Make connections.** Classroom discussions and individual learning are enhanced by students who have the ability to relate events, topics and experiences that they have had outside the classroom to what they are learning about in school. Parents can support the development of making meaningful connections by participating in responsive conversations with their children about what they are doing, experiencing and reading. Parents may point out links, commonalities and contrasts in every day interactions and ask questions that solicit thinking that compares and contrasts information.
- 3. Self-advocate.** Children who are able to state their wants and needs in a clear and polite manner tend to transition more easily to school. Parents do their children a favor in the long term when they consistently model and expect good manners within the family and discourage whining and tantrums. "Yes please" and "No thank you" are phrases that serve children well as their worlds expand.
- 4. Take turns and handle disappointment.** In school, children will have to wait, and no one can always be first or have their own way. When children have had practice at home in learning the important life skill of patience, sportsmanship, and understanding that life may not always seem fair, they will have increased success in their transition to school where they will be sharing space and attention with at least 20 other children.

5. **Sustain attention.** Children are expected to pay attention and listen within the classroom setting. Children who are accustomed to listening to books being read from start to finish and participating in conversations about the book are well prepared for Kindergarten. Parents can support the development of this skill by incorporating reading aloud into their regular routine. Family meals also provide an excellent opportunity to practice sitting still and participating in conversations by taking turns and listening until all participants are finished and ready to move on to the next activity.
6. **Cooperatively clean up.** In Kindergarten, children collectively clean up their environment, sharing the responsibility of keeping the classroom orderly. Children who know how to help with chores at home bring this skill to school and set a great example for the other students. Parents can help their children develop this positive habit by encouraging family members to pitch in and work together at home to keep the house tidy. Young children can put away their own toys and may also be excellent helpers at setting the table or transporting small piles of folded laundry.
7. **Independently dress themselves.** When children can dress and undress themselves into their shoes and jackets, they will have more time to play and participate in classroom activities. Time spent at home practicing putting on and taking off jackets, shoes, gloves and hats, as well as independently mastering toileting is well spent. Children should also be able to wash their own hands and to open and close lunch/snack bags and containers. Children who have mastered these skills have the advantage of not having to wait for help.
8. In addition to the traits listed above, I would encourage parents to cultivate the habit of reading books aloud on a daily basis. **Children who are familiar with books, stories and rhymes will be successful in school.**
9. Children also benefit from having had the opportunity at home to **explore and to take risks and to build, make and create their own fantasies, artwork and ideas.**

But the most important factor that helps a child successfully and confidently embark on their formal school journey is to have a **responsive, nurturing relationship** with someone who is crazy about them, someone who will **listen and talk to them about interesting things** and who **believes** that they have the **potential to learn and be successful in school.**

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