

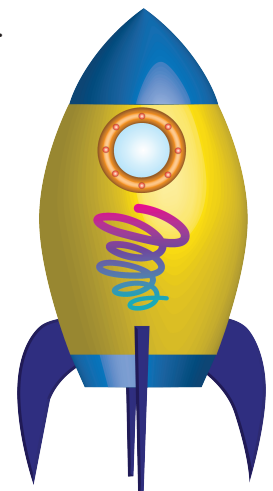
Countdown to Kindergarten



School Bus Tips

The world looks different from the window of a school bus. Can your child recognize where to get off the bus?

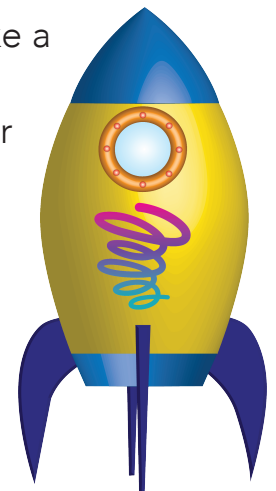
- ★ Practice walking to the bus stop and back to your house.
- ★ Give your child a visual clue to recognize the part of your house that can be seen from the school bus.
- ★ Discuss bus safety.
- ★ Never run in front of the bus.
- ★ If you drop something, leave it. We will get it after the bus leaves.
- ★ Stay in your seat; changing seats while the bus is moving is dangerous.
- ★ Put a card inside your child's backpack with your child's full name, your name, address and a phone number where you can be reached. The bus driver will use this info in case the child missed bus, got on the wrong bus, or fell asleep.
- ★ Put a name tag with your address on your child during the first week of school.
- ★ Buses look the same. They are identified by number. Practice looking for the bus number.
- ★ Discuss the terms:
 - Car rider
 - Bus rider
 - After school care
- ★ Assure your child the bus driver will safely bring them home.



Color Recognition

Along with shape recognition, color recognition is an important step in cognitive development for children. It plays a part in object recognition, and helps a child develop the descriptive language skills that will ensure clear communication. Here are a few simple things you can do with your child that will help develop this skill.

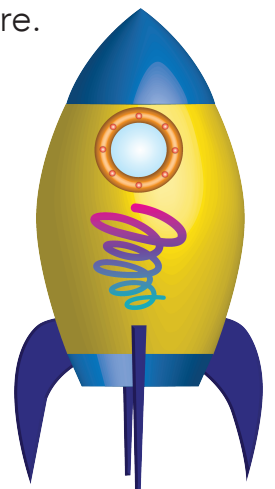
- ★ Help your child recognize and name the colors yellow, red, blue, orange, green, brown, black, purple, pink, gray and white.
- ★ Paint and experiment with watercolor paints.
- ★ Include colors in your daily conversations with your child.
- ★ Let your child color with markers on coffee filters, then spray the filter with water and talk about new colors you see.
- ★ Play with play dough and let your child mix some of the colors to discover how new colors are made.
- ★ Provide several cups of water colored with different colors of food coloring and use plastic eye droppers to drip colors onto paper towels or on paper.
- ★ Pour a box of baking soda onto a tray, then mix vinegar with food coloring and use eye droppers to drip into the dry baking soda. Watch the colors fizz.
- ★ Put some shaving cream in a Ziplock bag and add a couple of drops of food coloring. Let your child squeeze the bag until the color is mixed, then add drops of a different color and make a new color. Start with the primary colors red, yellow and blue and add colors to make the secondary colors purple, green and orange.
- ★ String beads of different colors and show your child how to make a pattern using the colors.
- ★ Buy juice pops or popsicles and ask your child to name the color before eating one.
- ★ Ask your child about the colors of his/her food.
- ★ Add food coloring to icing to create new colors.
- ★ Let your child make a multicolor tissue paper or construction paper collage



Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor development involves smaller muscles including those in the hand. Fine motor development is important because these are the muscles necessary for writing. To help your child develop fine motor control, try the following:

- ★ Trace lines from left to right without lifting the pencil.
- ★ Trace dotted lines without lifting the pencil.
- ★ Write first name and make the first letter a capital and the remaining letters lower case.
- ★ Pick up cotton balls or toothpicks with tweezers or tongs.
- ★ Cut with child sized scissors while holding the paper in the other hand. Magazines are fun to cut and you can draw straight, curvy and zigzag lines for your child to cut.
- ★ Explore with play dough, clay, or flour dough by making letters, animal shapes, balls, snakes, etc.
- ★ Practice using markers and crayons. Triangle shaped crayons are a wonderful way for children to learn how to hold a writing utensil correctly.
- ★ Use beads or straws cut into pieces to thread onto yarn or string. Paint with brushes or any other type of small utensil.
- ★ Play with Legos, small blocks, or put puzzles together.
- ★ Use glue sticks to glue pieces of paper together.
- ★ Practice making glue dots with glue bottles or add food coloring to small white school glue bottles and let your child squirt a picture.
- ★ Fill spray bottles with water and practice squirting. Children can spray their names outside.
- ★ Tear construction paper or tissue paper and make a collage by gluing it onto a larger sheet of paper.



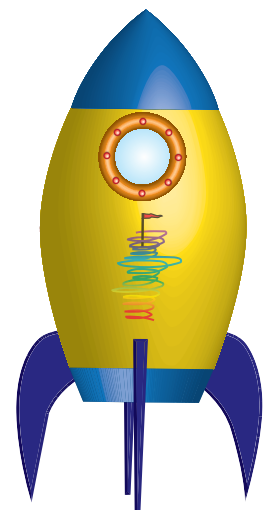
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Gross Motor Skills

Gross motor skills use the big muscles which are necessary for physical coordination. Gross motor activities also help develop both sides of the brain and their work together. Practice the following with your child to help with gross motor development.

- ★ Walk in a straight line for 8 feet. Use tape, curb, or a balance beam as a guide.
- ★ Touch right hand to left foot and left hand to right foot without moving feet and losing balance.
- ★ Gallop with smooth motion.
- ★ Throw overhand to try to hit a stationary target.
- ★ Move to catch a ball.
- ★ Use simple playground equipment such as slide, seesaw and swings.
- ★ Go up and down stairs, alternating feet, with or without assistance.
- ★ Run with control and balance; make quick stops and turn without slowing down.
- ★ Practice throwing scarves up in the air and catching them. Try throwing two scarves back and forth.
- ★ Practice throwing socks rolled into a ball as you have a pretend snow-ball fight.
- ★ Bounce a ball and catch it.
- ★ Throw balls or bean bags into buckets.
- ★ Run up to a stationary ball and kick it.
- ★ Kick a rolling ball.



Encouraging Independence

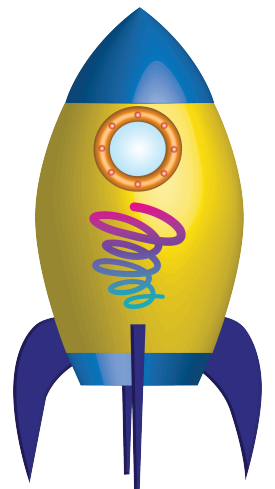
I can do it myself! Independence is the source of self-esteem, but bustling hallways, crowded buses, and cafeterias can be intimidating. Help your child become independent at school by discussing what it will feel like to be part of large groups. It is exciting to be a student in "Big School!"

Create opportunities for independence:

- ★ Encourage your child put on his/her own clothes, coat, and shoes.
- ★ Make sure your child can manipulate the buttons, snaps, and zippers on his/her clothes. Pick out tomorrow's clothes the night before and make sure all of the clothing items are manageable by the child.
- ★ Find a special place for your child's backpack.
- ★ Keep a full set of clean clothes in the backpack. Spills and accidents occur all during the school year.
- ★ Make sure your child can independently manage in the bathroom, including handwashing.

In the Cafeteria

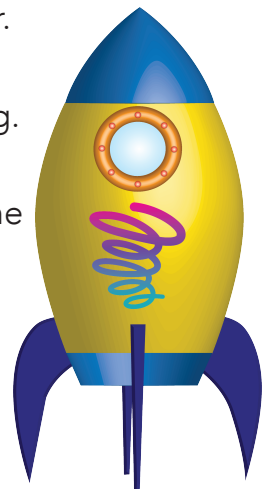
- ★ Rehearse lunch procedures including handling money, and making food choices. Your child will choose one fruit, one vegetable, one entree and one beverage.
- ★ Practice opening a milk carton and putting a straw in a juice box.
- ★ Encourage your child to try new foods at school.
- ★ Make sure your child can eat independently in a given time period. Lunch periods are typically 25 minutes. Be sure to include handwashing in the eating routine.



Literacy Skills

Help your child to get ready to read by practicing the following:

- ★ Read to your child at least 20 to 30 minutes every day and include different types of books: fiction, non-fiction, rhyming books, ABC books, etc.
- ★ Teach your child to name, write and recognize the letters in his name.
- ★ Make a name "puzzle" by writing your child's name on a piece of cardboard and cutting the letters apart. Then practice putting the letters in the correct order.
- ★ Put magnetic alphabet letters on a cookie sheet or put them on your refrigerator and make names.
- ★ Teach your child that each letter has an upper case and a lower case form.
- ★ Make upper and lower case letter cards from note cards and play a memory matching game.
- ★ Play A, B, C bingo. Educational bingo games can be found online or at a school supply store.
- ★ Talk about the letters in signs.
- ★ Make cookies pancakes or bread in the shape of letters. Canned bread dough works well.
- ★ Play literacy games like the following:
 - Sing the "Bingo" song and substitute the letters of your child's name.
 - Play "I Spy" by saying "I see something that starts with T."
 - Talk about a letter and its sound. Encourage your child to think of words that start with that sound.
 - Encourage your child to think of rhyming words.
 - Put pudding in a Ziplock bag and practice writing names with a finger. Be sure to eat the pudding when you are finished.
 - Choose any letter, write it on cardstock and place inside a Ziplock bag. Let your child trace the letter with a dry erase marker and then wipe.
 - Have your child retell a story in the order it happened after hearing the story read.



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Math Skills

Help your child get ready to ready by practicing the following:

- ★ Practice counting verbally from one to 30.
- ★ Help your child "touch count" items by counting while deliberately touching each item.
- ★ Help your child recognize and practice writing the numerals 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.
- ★ Help your child make groups of up to five objects. For example, include two blocks and three potatoes to make a group of five.
- ★ Talk about patterns in clothes and other objects. An example would be red stripe, white stripe, a blue stripe, etc.
- ★ Show your child rectangles, triangles, circles and squares and practice finding them in your home. For example, a door is a rectangle. Also practice finding shapes in food, such as a saltine is a square.
- ★ Talk about positional words like beside, inside, next to, close to, above, below.
- ★ Create problems by playing with up to five objects. For example, ask your child how many blocks are left when you take three blocks away from the five blocks you have. Or ask how many are there when you add one carrot to the two you already have.
- ★ Play with shape puzzles. These can be found at most discount and toy stores.
- ★ Put a large paper triangle, square, rectangle and circle on your floor. Ask your child to find objects that match the shapes and place the objects on top of each shape.
- ★ Make Jello Jigglers and cut them out with shape cookie cutters. Ask your child to name the Jello shape they would like to eat.

