



PARENTING POSTS

A newsletter for parents of kindergarten students.

Welcome to Kindergarten!

Whether your child is taking to school like an old pro or still is getting used to new school spaces, teachers and friends, having a kindergartner in the house still requires a period of adjustment for the family. This newsletter will follow you and your kindergarten student through the year with tips on typical development and behaviors of 5- and 6-year-old children.

School is your child's job. It is where children spend a large portion of their day. Accomplishments and failures are measured in structured ways and students compare themselves to one another. They may feel stress from facing the unknown or from being challenged too much or not enough. School, like work, involves meeting and learning about new people. Parents' expectations also can add pressure to the new student. What can families do to help make school less stressful and more productive for your new little learner?

Spend time each day going through the backpack together. Your child's teacher will count on you to find the notes and assignments sent home in your child's backpack and online. Spending a few minutes each day with your child and his or her backpack can save you a lot of time and cut down on surprises. It is also an easy way to get the conversation started about what is happening at school. Add dates to your family calendar to avoid missing school events that will be important to your child.

Ask your child open-ended questions. Ask questions such as "What are some of the rules you are learning at school?" "Tell me about a friend you have met at school." "Who did you help today?" Use your child's answer as a springboard for practicing skills they are learning at school.

Keep a positive attitude about your child's school, teacher and classmates. Your enthusiasm and positive comments will be contagious! Conversely, if you have a problem or concern, take care of it as quickly as possible with an email, phone call or visit to the school, preferably when your child is not able to hear the conversation.



Kindergarten isn't first grade.

Kindergarten is a child's first formal school experience. It should be a time for hands-on learning, developing social skills and exploring how the larger world outside of the child's own home and family works. Paper and pencil tasks such as worksheets and workbooks will come later in children's school years.

Be a good listener. Your child will share more if they know you are interested. The communication habit that develops now will follow through for many school years to come.

Volunteer in the classroom or at school events. Show your child and their teacher that you have an interest in what goes on at school. Getting to know the teaching methods and learning expectations can help you better understand what your kindergarten student is experiencing.

Communicate with the teacher. Let the kindergarten teacher know about your child's likes, dislikes, joys and fears. Getting to know a classroom full of new faces takes awhile. Also, any time your child or family is experiencing an out-of-the-ordinary event, positive or negative, be sure to let the teacher know. Ask the teacher to watch for changes in your child and report any concerning behavior to you.



Stress Less Activity

Stress is part of everyone's life. Even young children! Try this activity with your child to help reduce stress and enjoy time together.

Provide markers and shelf paper or other long paper for your child to draw out their feelings.



Help your child recognize that bathroom accidents, forgetting the answer when it's your turn to talk and spilling are just part of life and learning. These things happen to everyone at one time or another. What can families do to help lessen the stress of mishaps, failure and mistaken behaviors?

Resist the urge to fix the situation for your child. Listen closely to the child's story. Hear their thoughts and feelings. Let your child know you are sorry that the situation happened. Ask if they need to do something to make it better. For example, they may want to thank the person who cleaned the spill or accident. Next, ask what the child can do differently the next time. Then help your kindergartner move on to new experiences more prepared for the "next time."

Set your child up for success. Give your child the tools and instructions they need for any new task. Be encouraging but let your child do the work of growing and learning, making mistakes and trying again. Play board games, cards and dominoes with your child and don't purposefully lose. Losing at a game can help them learn about other, bigger disappointments, too, especially if the winner gets to put the game away! An enjoyable and success-filled first year at school can set the stage for a positive attitude toward learning for a lifetime.

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