

# GOING TO KINDERGARTEN

With Rory the Lion

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## Parent Guide

This can be an exciting time for you and your child.  
We're here to help!

Explore helpful information, tips, and tricks  
on school readiness topics like:

- > How to know if your child is ready for kindergarten
- > How to choose the right kindergarten program for your child
- > How to help your child and family prepare for kindergarten
- > How to help grow your child's love of reading



ILLINOIS



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# How Do You Decide If Your Child is Ready for Kindergarten?


Children begin to walk or talk at different ages. They develop skills at their own pace. Here are some steps you can take:

- **Consult with Your Child’s Medical Provider**
- **Talk with Their Teacher or Childcare Providers**
- **Trust Your Own Opinion**

## School Readiness Milestones

Five-year-olds may have some skills listed in the chart below.<sup>1</sup> Each child will develop at their own pace. These skills will give you an idea of how your child is learning.

 <b>Social language and self-help</b>	 <b>Verbal language</b> (Expressive and receptive)	 <b>Fine Motor</b>	 <b>Gross Motor</b>
Spreads with a knife	Tells a story of 2 sentences or more	Copies a triangle	Is beginning to skip
Dresses and undresses without help	Follows directions for 4 individual prepositions	Draws a 6-part person	Walks on tiptoes when asked
Goes to bathroom independently	Counts 5 objects	Copies first name	Catches a bounced ball with 2 hands
Is dry through the day	Names 3 or more numbers	Cuts well with scissors	
Plays and interacts with peers	Names 4 or more letters out of order	Writes 2 or more letters	
Answers “why” questions			

 **Do you have any questions about your child’s development?**  
Contact your child’s medical provider.

# How Do You Choose the Right Kindergarten Program for Your Child?



In Illinois, children should be 5 years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> to enroll in kindergarten. Families should check the school’s boundaries to make sure their child may attend kindergarten at that school.<sup>2</sup>

- ✔ **What are the factors you should consider when selecting a kindergarten program?**
  - Start by deciding if a half-day or full-day program is right for your child
  - Consider class size to ensure an environment that aligns with your child’s needs
  - Explore alternatives like preschool programs if it’s still developmentally appropriate for your child
- ✔ **What are the benefits of a half-day kindergarten?**

Every school district in Illinois must offer a half-day program. The benefits for some children are to:

  - Ease the change from home to school
  - Offer play-based learning
- ✔ **What are the benefits of a full-day kindergarten?**

There are many benefits to attending full-day kindergarten according to the National Education Association<sup>3</sup>. In addition to the benefits listed above, research shows that full-day kindergarten programs can:

  - Boost reading and math skills
  - Improve social and emotional skills
  - Build early reading skills



## Get Support

If you are unsure of the next steps, talk to your child’s medical provider for more information, screening, and resources to make sure your little one gets the best start to school.



# How Can You Help Your Child and Family Get Ready for Kindergarten?



## Big changes can bring up a lot of questions and feelings for everyone.

- Ask your child how they are feeling about starting school.
- Think about your feelings about this big change.

Thinking about you and your family’s feelings about kindergarten can help you prepare for this new experience.

## How Can Parents and Caregivers Help?



### ✔ Explore Big Feelings

Children and their families may feel worried, fearful, excited, angry, or sad when they think about starting kindergarten. Parents can help by:<sup>4</sup>

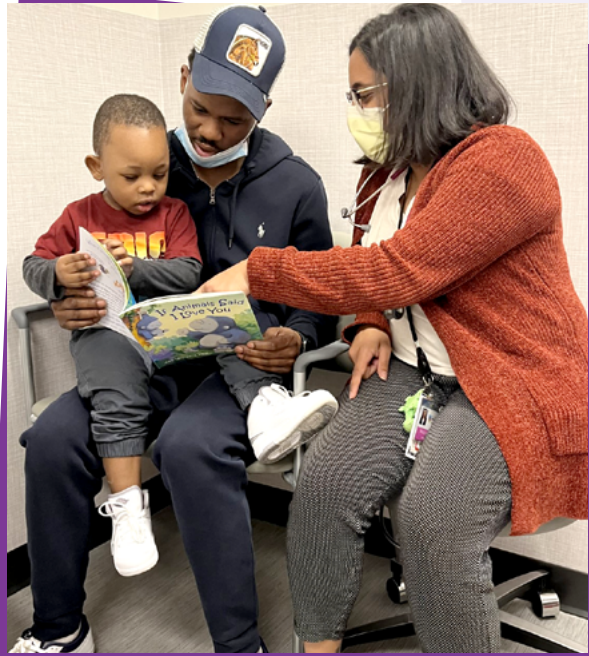
- **Using colors** to name your child’s feelings
- **Using books** to name the feelings of characters
- **Using exercise** to get your child’s energy out
- **Using deep breathing** exercises to relax



### ✔ Start New Routines

Daily routines help your child feel safe and confident. These routines can also help your family plan ahead.

- **Adjust Their Bed Time**  
Your child needs a good night’s sleep to do well in school. If they stay up late during the summer, consider making their bedtime a few minutes earlier each night before school starts.<sup>5</sup>
- **Get Ready the Night Before**  
Let your child pick out their clothes for the next school day. This can make the morning go smoothly.
- **Talk About Meals**  
Plan your meals the night before. Talking about breakfast and lunch plans with your child can make the mornings go smoothly.<sup>6</sup>



### ✔ Make Connections Between Home and School

You will always be a teacher to your child even when they start kindergarten. Here are some ways you can help your child make connections between home and school:

- **Ask your child and their teacher** what activities they do at school each day
- **Add to your child’s learning.** You can go to the library, take out books, and do art projects at home.
- **Consider a nap.** If your child naps at school, they may also need daytime rest on the weekend.<sup>7</sup>



# How Can You Grow Your Child's Love of Reading?



There are many ways to build on their love of reading as your child grows.



## ✔ Continue Reading Together

Reading aloud together helps build meaningful connections between children and their caregivers. These relationships often begin at birth. It is important to support your child in developing healthy physical, cognitive, and emotional skills. Continue to read together, tell stories, and share books even after your child enters kindergarten.



## ✔ Build Your Child's At-Home Library

Reach Out & Read supports families with up to 15 books over 5 years. You can continue to build your child's at-home library by purchasing additional books, trading books with family and friends, or finding used books.



## ✔ Visit Your Local Library

Reach Out & Read helps with starting your child's home library. Sign up for a library card to get unlimited access to books.



Check these books out at your nearest library:

- **Lena's Shoes Are Nervous**  
*Written By Keith Calabrese & Illustrated By Juana Medina*
- **The Pigeon Has To Go To School!**  
*Written & Illustrated By Mo Willems*
- **My First Day**  
*Written & Illustrated By Phùng Nguyễn Quang & Huynh Kim Liên*
- **Yefferson Actually**  
*Written By Katherine Trejo & Scott Martin-Rowe & Illustrated By Karla Monterrosa*
- **I Got The School Spirit**  
*Written By Connie Schofield-Morrison & Illustrated By Frank Morrison*
- **Wemberly Worried**  
*Written & Illustrated By Kevin Henkes*
- **Marker**  
*Written By Anna Kang & Illustrated By Christopher Weyant*
- **Yenebi's Drive To School**  
*Written & Illustrated By Sindy Santamaria*
- **School's First Day Of School**  
*Written By Adam Rex & Illustrated By Christian Robinson*
- **King Of Kindergarten**  
*Written By Derrick Barnes & Illustrated By Vanessa Brantley-Newton*
- **Queen Of Kindergarten**  
*Written By Derrick Barnes & Illustrated By Vanessa Brantley-Newton*
- **We Don't Eat Our Classmates**  
*Written & Illustrated By Ryan T. Higgins*
- **Llama Llama Misses Mama**  
*Written & Illustrated By Anna Dewdney*
- **The Day You Begin**  
*Written By Jacqueline Woodson & Illustrated By Rafael López*
- **Seamos Amigos**  
*Written By René Colato Lainez & Illustrated By Nomar Perez*
- **Mariposas En El Primer Dia De Clases**  
*Written By Annie Silvestro & Illustrated By Dream Chen*
- **Twas The Night Before Kindergarten**  
*Written By Natasha Wing & Illustrated By Julie Durrell*
- **Pete The Cat: Rocking In My School Shoes**  
*Written By Eric Litwin & Illustrated By James Dean*

# Did you Know...

**that reading aloud is beneficial starting at birth and beyond?**



*“The benefits of reading aloud to preschool age children are tremendous! Reading aloud provides parents and children with good experiences in the intellectual and affective domains.*

- *In the intellectual domain, parents see their children develop vocabulary knowledge, print awareness, and knowledge of story structure. They see their children begin to insert words into familiar stories and to memorize parts of their favorite ones.*
- *In the affective domain, parents and children benefit by spending quality and quantity time together. As parents invest time into the lives of their children, they will experience the joy of watching them learn and grow as readers.*

**The benefits of reading aloud to preschool children are many; one of the most important benefits of reading aloud is developing a lifelong love of reading.”<sup>8</sup>**

#### **Sources: How Do You Decide If Your Child is Ready for Kindergarten?**

1. <https://publications.aap.org/DocumentLibrary/Solutions/Toolkits/BFTK-IR/Bright%20Futures%20Milestones%20and%20Anticipatory%20Guidance.pdf>

#### **Sources: How Do You Choose the Right Kindergarten Program for Your Child?**

2. <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/answers/starting-kindergarten/#when-do-children-begin-kindergarten-in-illinois>  
3. [https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/18001\\_Full-Day\\_Kindergarten\\_Policy\\_Brief-final.pdf](https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/18001_Full-Day_Kindergarten_Policy_Brief-final.pdf)

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7. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/preschool/Pages/Is-Your-Child-Ready-for-School.aspx>

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8. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED448866>

