

Starting primary school: Supporting your child

Starting primary school is a big step in your little one's life. It can be exciting and scary for them, and for you.

If you're feeling nervous, anxious or overwhelmed about getting them ready for this new challenge, know that it's completely understandable and you're not the only one.

Here are some of the key skills you can work on with your child, to help you both feel happy and confident when the first day of school arrives.

Practice using the toilet

It's important your child feels happy using the toilet on their own, so practice this lots.

Some items of your child's school uniform, like tights, can be tricky, so bear this in mind.

Give them plenty of praise and keep the whole experience positive. That way, they'll feel confident using the toilet without any help at school.

Get dressed and undressed

Encourage your child to begin dressing and undressing themselves.

Getting dressed is a complex skill for younger children to master, with buttons and zips being particularly tricky for little fingers. So, make sure you consider this when buying a school uniform.

It's a good idea to get your child's school uniform ready the night before and set aside extra time in the morning for your child to get dressed independently. Avoiding a morning rush can mean avoiding a more stressful experience for both of you.

Socialise with others

In the months leading up to starting school, encourage your child to take part in new activities. This will help them feel more comfortable in unfamiliar situations and encourage them to socialise with other children.

At home you could try playing board games together. This is a great way to develop your child's patience and understanding of waiting to take turns. It will help playing with other children at school.

Eat and drink independently

If your child is having hot dinners at school, they will need to feel confident while eating independently.

Get them to practice using a knife and fork at home and encourage them to clear away their plate after they've finished eating, as they might have to do this at school.

Get them a water bottle as they'll be able to top this up at school. And encourage them to drink water, not just juice.

Encourage early skills

You can encourage early writing skills in your child by providing crayons and pencils to play with, looking at the letters in their name together and involving them in everyday tasks like writing birthday cards and shopping lists.

However, don't worry about trying to teach your child too much before they start school. Their teacher will support their learning once they get there.

Reassure your child that starting school is a great thing, and they'll still be coming home to you at the end of the day.

And finally, remember to ask them about their day. This way if they tell you of any worries they may have, you can reassure them and resolve any issues quicker.

It can be hard to see your little one head off to school - and you're certainly not alone - but try to think of it as the next exciting step in their life.

For lots more advice on helping you and your child get ready for starting primary school, take a look at [Health for Under 5s](#).