

# Social Skills for Starting School

As you probably remember, school isn't just about learning math, science and reading. You also learn how to interact with others, collaborate and resolve conflicts.

Are there things you can do as a parent to prepare your child to be socially successful? Absolutely there are.

Here are some tips for setting habits in the home that help your young student flourish in kindergarten.

## Establishing Independence

For many children, school can be one of the first times they're separated from their parents for a long period. That can be stressful if they haven't learned good independence skills.

Fortunately, there are little things you can add to your child's daily routine to foster independence at a young age.

For example, give your student tasks they can do on their own. Little chores are good, like setting the table at mealtimes or cleaning up toys after playing. Let your child get dressed and put on shoes by themselves.

Let your child do activities on their own, like completing a puzzle. But also use friend time to teach your child to take turns and share with peers.

## Instilling Social Skills

Kindergarten teachers look for students to be able to get along with others, follow directions, take turns, and say "goodbye" to parents. These skills come naturally when there's a good social foundation in the home.

Some habits you can establish in the home that set your child up for success include:

- Setting rules for your child, and have consequences if those rules are broken.
- Have a regular, set time for meals and for going to bed.
- Encourage your child to finish hard or frustrating tasks once they've started them.
- Teach your child to consider the feelings of others.
- Discuss and demonstrate positive ways for your child to express their feelings.
- Discourage hitting, biting, screaming and other negative behaviors.
- Hug and kiss your child several times a day.

## Making a Great Communicator

The last piece of a successful kindergartener is good communication skills. Your child will need to say thoughts clearly and listen to directions carefully.

Fortunately, teaching your child to communicate effectively is as simple as communicating with your child. Have regular conversations with your child, and teach them to listen when others are speaking.

Always answer your child's questions, even if the answer is "no."

Encourage your child to learn and use new words. You can build their vocabulary through talking, sure, but also through singing and rhyming. Use words in the home you want your child using.

Also, encourage note writing. You can write notes to your child, and they can write notes to you or other family members. They can dictate notes for you to write until they're able to write for themselves.

With communication skills under their belt, along with independence and social skills, your child can be school ready. Like all good things, it just has to start in the home.

