

GETTING READY TO START SCHOOL

Starting school is a big change for children and families. Getting used to new people, places and routines can be exciting – and challenging. There’s a lot you can do to help your child have a good start to school.

What is a good start to school?

Families and carers are their children’s first teachers. The things you do at home with your child help their learning and development and prepare them for school. The best way to support your child’s learning and development is through **play**.

A good start to school helps children learn well and feel happier. And when children are happy at school, they want to keep learning. Your child’s school will work hard to meet your child’s individual needs, with extra support if it’s needed. You can also support your child by doing things that help them settle in at school and feel safe, confident, and connected.

Play and learn at home

Play is the best way to help your child learn. Playing develops lifelong skills in maths, like counting, sorting, grouping and sizing. Play helps your child discover nature and science and lets them be creative. When your child plays, they are also learning about emotions and developing their language and literacy skills. Here are some things you can do at home:

- **Everyday activities:** Children learn through everyday activities like cooking, helping to set and clear the table, sorting the washing, putting clothes and toys away, and caring for plants and pets. You can help your child learn by asking questions, like ‘*How many cups of flour do we need?*’ or ‘*Can you find the matching socks?*’
- **Games:** Playing simple games like UNO, Snap, Memory, I Spy, and Hide and Seek helps your child learn and teaches them about taking turns.
- **Building blocks:** Building with blocks like LEGO, wooden blocks or cardboard boxes develops fine motor skills and lets your child be creative and solve problems.
- **Arts and crafts:** Art and craft activities also promote creativity and build fine motor and problem-solving skills.
- **Dress up:** Dressing up in old clothes and pretending to be different characters builds creativity and language skills.
- **Music, stories and dance:** Reading, telling stories, listening and dancing to music, and ‘treasure hunts’ to find objects around the house or garden all build your child’s language skills.
- **Outside play:** Walking, climbing, riding a bike or scooter, going to the playground, building cubbies, throwing and catching a ball, hitting soft balls with a tennis racket or soft cricket bat, digging in the dirt and mud – all of these help your child learn and develop.
- **Investigate and ask questions:** When your child is playing, ask questions like ‘*Can you describe..?*’, ‘*I wonder what would happen if..?*’, ‘*How could you answer that question..?*’

- **Routines:** Doing things at the same time each day lets your child know what to expect and helps them manage their feelings. Routines help children cope with school. It's especially important to have a bedtime routine, for example: have dinner and a bath, put on pyjamas, brush teeth, read books, and then go to bed.

Make school a familiar place

Being 'ready for school' is not about academic learning, but about understanding what school will be like and having positive expectations. Here are some things you can do to help your child:

- Participate in any transition to school programs offered by your child's kindergarten or school.
- Practise travelling to and from school.
- Let your child play with other children who will be going to the same school.
- Encourage independence by teaching your child how to get dressed, go to the toilet, wash their hands, put on sunscreen, and pack and carry their school bag.
- Talk about starting school. Get your child excited about school and talk about any worries they have.
- Read books or tell stories about starting school.
- Talk about and practise what will happen after school.
- Get ready for pick-up and drop-off by checking the school's start and finishing times and finding out where to drop off and collect your child.
- Start using the teacher's name, if you can.

How your child's kindergarten will help

Kindergarten also helps children get ready to start school. At kindergarten, children develop skills through play, work with others and make friends.

You child's kindergarten teacher will help your child move from kindergarten to school by writing a **Transition Learning and Development Statement (Transition Statement)**. The Transition Statement is given to your child's future school. It describes your child's abilities, strengths, and interests and how they learn best. You will be asked to help fill out your child's Transition Statement, and your child can also share their thoughts and feelings.

For further information about the Transition Statement, please visit the Departments' website (see below).

Find out more

- [Tips for starting school \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au)
- [Moving from kindergarten to school \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au)
- [How to choose a school and enrol \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au)
- [Starting school: preparing your child | Raising Children Network](https://www.raisingchildrennetwork.org.au)
- [A Healthy Start to School - Better Health Channel](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)
- [Transition to school resources for families \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au)