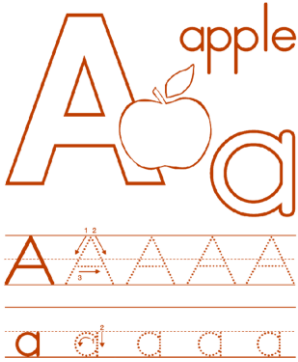


Get Ready for Kindergarten

It's a big deal when your son or daughter begins school. The more you can do to give them a head start, the better.

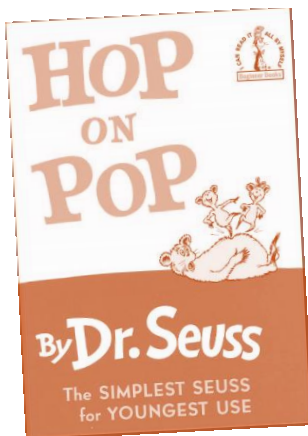
This guide offers five simple ways you can help your child get ready for kindergarten, so they have a great first day at school and many more great days after that.

1. Get ready with letters and sounds



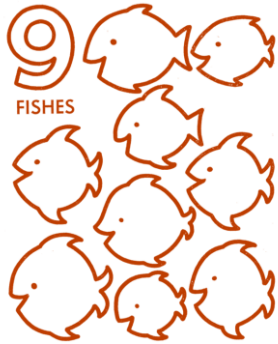
- **Practice recognizing letters and the sounds they make.** Do more than just sing the A-B-C's. Point to a letter and ask your child to name it and its sound. How about upper and lowercase?
- **Teach your child to hold a pencil and write letters.** Practice tracing letters, or have your child write with a finger in salt or sugar on a plate. Make it a game.
- **Ask your child to identify sounds at the beginnings and ends of words.** What's the first sound in "dog"? The last sound in "bus"?
- **Play with your child by making rhymes.** What rhymes with "fish"? Also, read books that emphasize rhyming, like *Cat in the Hat*.

2. Get ready with words



- **Read with your child for 15 minutes every day.** Don't miss a day! Discuss new words and ask questions about the story. "Why did he do that? What do you think will happen next?"
- **Talk with your child as often as possible.** Use full sentences and help your child practice responding with full sentences.
- **Explore new words together.** Encourage your child to ask the meaning of new words she hears.
- **When reading together, point out "sight" words** – simple words your child can recognize without having to sound them out, like "the," "is," "him," "her," and "my."

3. Get ready with numbers



- **Work on identifying numbers up to 20.**
- **Practice “touch counting.”** For instance, if your child is eating crackers for a snack, have her count them first, touching each one along the way.
- **Ask your child to name numbers that you see.** They could be on a cereal box or a street sign. What number is that?
- **Practice comparing more and less.** Which plate has more carrots? Which cup has less milk?

4. Get ready with friends



- **Encourage your child to express feelings and needs with words, not behaviors.** For instance, saying “I feel upset” instead of acting out.
- **Practice being polite,** like saying please and thank you and not interrupting someone else who is speaking.
- **Teach your child to introduce himself nicely to other children.** Can she ask another child to play a game? Respond appropriately to an invitation from another child?

5. Get ready to succeed in the classroom



- **Encourage your child to participate in group activities and try new things,** even when she doesn’t want to.
- **Push your child to keep trying when he runs into a problem,** instead of getting frustrated or refusing to continue.
- **Practice giving your child directions with multiple steps** and see if she can follow them. “Please put all your toys where they belong and then put on your shoes.”