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**Ages 4+**

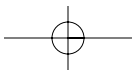
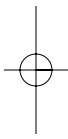
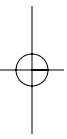


ABC 123

**Activity Guide**

Tackle skills your child will need to know before entering Kindergarten.

	<b>WARNING:</b> CHOKING HAZARD - Small parts. Not for children under 3 years.
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## Introduction

As you prepare to embark on the exciting journey of your child entering kindergarten, you may be wondering what information needs to be known in advance. On the first day of kindergarten, teachers like to see children who are healthy, mature, curious, well-behaved, and eager to learn. Although kindergarten teachers' expectations will vary, they work through a consistent list of skill areas. The top ten skill areas are as follows:

- Social Skills
- Self-Help Skills
- Speaking Skills
- Listening Skills
- Fine Motor Skills
- Gross Motor Skills
- Literacy Skills (Reading and Writing)
- Math Skills
- Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills
- Creative Skills

\*Use the star stickers included in this kit to monitor your child's progress with the checklist on page 19.

With this in mind, this booklet engages children in activities that apply to the readiness concepts from the above listed skills.

The activities have been created to be fun for both you and your child and as a way to help your child gain the skills needed

to prepare for kindergarten. Research shows that children are more likely to succeed at school when families support them from the very beginning. Families that involve their children in activities that address speaking, reading, writing, exploring, playing, computing, and thinking demonstrate the importance of learning and its value among all family members.

We hope you will use this Let's Tackle Kindergarten™ kit to prepare your child for the wonderful world of kindergarten!

Written For Learning Resources® By:

Sue Hansen

Pre-K Curriculum Specialist, Educator



## Social Skills

Social skills are sometimes considered more important than academic skills at the preschool/kindergarten age. Social skills are vital to a child's classroom participation, ability to make friends, playing with others, and in fostering appropriate interaction with adults, teachers, and peers. The activities listed below will help your child with his or her social skills to ensure that academics can be taught in an appropriate way.

- Prior to the start of kindergarten, your child should have had many opportunities to play with other children in a variety of social situations. Trips to the park, visits with friends, and recreational activities with other children encourage social skills.
- Use the cards in the kit, with the purple border, that show facial expressions. Hold up a card for your child to see and ask, "How do you think this person is feeling?" Discuss feelings such as scared, happy, and mad, with your child.
- Use the cards in the kit that show facial expressions. Display a handheld mirror and have your child try to make the same facial expression that the card shows.
- Use the pet counters in the kit. Place some of the counters in a pile. Work on positive communication by asking your child, "May I have a blue dog, please?" When your child gives you the correct animal, make sure you say, "Thank you." Reverse the roles and have your child ask you for an animal. Remind him or her to say please and thank you each time.

## Self-Help Skills

Children entering kindergarten should be prepared to take care of their personal, age-appropriate needs. Some of these skills include caring for personal belongings, taking care of bathroom needs, manipulating zippers, buttons, and other clothing fasteners, eating independently, and demonstrating independence in basic personal care. Listed below are activities that you can do with your child to encourage good personal well-being skills.

- Always have your child clean up when he or she has finished playing. When using the items in this kit, make sure your child helps put all the items away. This teaches your child to care for belongings and to be responsible.
- Make cleaning up fun by making it a game (race against the clock or each other), or by singing a song.
- Encourage your child to become independent in the bathroom. Make a chart or have rewards for times when your child finishes independently in the bathroom.
- Work each day on buttons and zippers. Always praise your child for any attempt made to button and/or zipper. Keep repeating the activity and teach your child about perseverance and not giving up.
- Play games with your child where everyone takes turns. This encourages your child to learn to wait. Talk with your child about waiting patiently.
- Have your child learn his or her first and last name. Have talks with your child about the members of your family. Your child should know the names of the people in your family. You can draw pictures and look at photographs of people in your family. This helps your child understand who they are, and it will give your child a sense of belonging, which will promote healthy self-esteem.

- Use the cards in the kit with the red border. These are school-related photographic cards. Show your child the pictures and talk about what happens at school. Have your child tell you what they see in the pictures. This will help your child understand what may happen in a typical day at school. This should help with the transition from preschool (or home) to regular kindergarten.

## Speaking Skills

Most five-year-olds can speak and express themselves with a variety of words, and, in turn, they can understand a large variety of words used in conversations and stories. It is expected that five-year-old children can speak in complete sentences. There are many activities that can be done to encourage good speaking skills from your child. Always try to speak to your child in the way you hope that your child will speak to others.

- Read the same books repetitively. See if your child can say what word comes next, what happens on the next page, or what words rhyme in the story. Reading often to your child ensures they develop a strong vocabulary for speaking.
- Use the story-starter picture cards with the orange border. Pull out all five cards and have your child explain what is shown in the picture, and then ask him or her to make up a silly story using each image.
- Use the story-starter picture cards to play “Can You Guess?” Have your child pick a card and hide it so you (the adult) cannot see it. Next, have your child give you a clue about the picture, and then you should take a guess as to what is on the picture card. If you are not correct, have your child give you another clue about the picture. After three clues, your child can show you the card (if you have not guessed correctly by then).

Try reversing roles and have your child guess what image you are hiding.

- Use the pet counters. Have your child take two pet counters out to see them. Ask your child, “How are these animals the same?” or “How are these animals different?” Having your child tell you similarities and differences is a great thinking and speaking activity. You can also use the story-starter picture cards for this activity.
- When you are speaking to your child, try to speak properly and respectfully. Your child will pick up on your good speaking habits as they grow. Give reasons when you ask your child to do something such as, “Please move your toy car off the stairs so no one falls over it” or, “Please clean up your toys so we can get ready to have lunch.” Try not to use lines such as, “because I said so.” When we give our children reasons for doing things, they learn about consequences and cause and effect.

## Listening Skills

A common phrase heard in any kindergarten classroom is, “Boys and Girls, please listen.” You can help your child develop listening skills in many ways. The following activities will help your child to focus, recall, interpret, and carry out multiple steps in order. All of these skills are essential for being a good listener in kindergarten and beyond.

- Have your child close his or her eyes while you make a sound such as jingling coins, clapping, ripping paper, or banging pot lids together. Ask your child to tell you what he or she heard.
- Good listening also ensures that a child can follow directions. Try giving your child one-step directions such as, “Please put the crayons in the box.” After your child is secure with one-step directions, try two-step directions such as, “Put your crayons in the box, then wash your hands.”

- Get a write-on/wipe-off crayon or dry-erase marker, and use the white board included in the kit. Give your child a direction to follow such as, “Draw a happy face,” or, “Draw four lines that go up and down.” Have your child show you the drawing, and praise his or her efforts to listen. Don’t necessarily focus on the drawing or fine motor work.
- Play Simon Says with the beanbag. Tell your child where to put the beanbag (on a chair, in the sink, under the blanket, etc). This activity also works on positional words such as above, below, under, next to, on top of.
- Use the animal picture cards with the green border and ask your child to imitate the sound that each animal makes. You may have to make the animal sound first, forcing your child to listen and remember the sound.
- A fun activity to see if your child REALLY listens is to replace the beginning sound of a word in a sentence. For example, “Please put your dishes in the fink” (should be sink). See if your child can hear the mistake you made. You can also do this with familiar songs such as “Hinkle Hinkle Little Har.” This is called sound manipulation and will help with learning to read later on.
- Put some of the plastic letters in one of the stacking cups. Have your child pick out one letter. Have your child say the name of the letter and the sound it makes. Have your child say a word that begins with that sound.

## Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor skills refer to the small muscle movements of the fingers that help your child perform everyday tasks. Some fine motor activities that your child will be exposed to in kindergarten are drawing and writing with a pencil, painting with a paintbrush, cutting with scissors, building puzzles, manipulating small objects,

coloring with crayons and markers, and working on basic art and craft projects. The more activities you can do at home to refine your child's fine motor skills, the more success your child will have in kindergarten.

- Allow your child to play with hands-on mediums such as clay, play dough, fun foam, silly putty, etc. Your child should squish, squeeze, mold, and manipulate these things to strengthen muscles in the fingers.
- Give your child a plain piece of paper and use one die from the kit. Roll the die and whatever number the die lands on, have your child tear the paper in that many pieces. Now, work with a smaller piece of paper that your child just tore apart. Roll the die again and tear the smaller paper into pieces to match the number rolled.
- With adult supervision, give your child “safety” scissors to use. Scissors strengthen a variety of muscles in the fingers and hand. Allow your child to cut all types of paper with different thicknesses (construction paper, sandpaper, cardboard, magazines, etc.)
- Use tweezers (or tongs or chopsticks) to pick up small food pieces. Your child will enjoy eating while strengthening fine motor movements.
- Use the attribute shapes included in this kit, and have your child trace around the shapes. Put a shape on a piece of paper and use a crayon or pencil to trace around the edge of the shape. An adult may have to hold the shape in place (so it doesn't move) while the child traces.
- Work on developing your child's “pencil grip” by providing lots of “tools” to write or color with: pencils, crayons, markers, and more. To develop an appropriate grip, you may want to place a cotton ball around your child's little finger and ring finger. Your child should be able to hold the writing tool and grip the

cotton ball while coloring or writing. By holding the cotton ball in place, the remaining fingers are forced to grip appropriately.

- Use the white board and a write-on/wipe-off crayon or dry-erase marker to have your child attempt to draw a self-portrait. Encourage your child to include at least five body parts such as head, arms, legs, eyes, and a mouth. Once your child has accurately drawn a basic self-portrait, teach him or her to add other parts such as fingers, feet, nose, hair, ears, etc.

## Gross Motor Skills

Gross motor skills are the abilities needed to control the large muscles of your body, including large movements of the arms, hands, legs, and feet. Gross motor skills allow children to run, jump, hop, skip, and more. The activities listed below will encourage your child to use the large muscles in developing gross motor skills.

- Use the animal picture cards with the green border. Display a card and have your child move like that animal would move. For example, your child could hop like a frog, slither like a snake, or flap like a bird in flight.
- Play “Follow the Leader.” Have your child follow and mimic you. Make sure to include large gross motor movements such as jumping, hopping, arms waving, etc. You may also want to reverse the roles and have your child be the leader with you as the follower.
- Use the beanbag in this kit to play an easy game that involves the gross motor skills of balancing and body recognition. Have your child stand up and hold the beanbag in his or her hand. Instruct your child to put the beanbag on a body part. For example, you might say, “Put the beanbag on your elbow.” After putting the beanbag on that body part, see if your child can balance it there while you count to ten (or twenty to make

it more challenging). Try a variety of body parts and even some tricky ones like your little finger, your big toe, or your eyelash!

- Use the beanbag and play simple games of catch. Encourage your child to throw and catch with both hands.
- Use the beanbag or a rubber ball to strengthen muscles in the legs. Instruct your child to put the beanbag (or ball) between his or her knees, and then jump or walk or hop.
- Always encourage your child to be physically active to ensure good development of the large muscles of the body. Learning to bounce a ball, ride a bike, skip, skate, kick a football, and swimming are great activities for your child to participate in.

## Reading Skills

Reading aloud to your child each and every day is one of the most important ways for your child to develop literacy skills. Giving children direct contact with books is very important for increasing their attention spans and listening abilities, and developing their vocabulary. Aside from reading aloud to your child, there are some additional reading activities listed below that will benefit your child greatly.

- Read daily and read often. Make reading part of your daily routine. Read predictable books and reread favorite books. As you read, talk with your child. Encourage your child to ask questions and discuss the story that you just read.
- Children are expected to come to kindergarten with appropriate “book-handling skills.” Children should know how to open a book, turn the pages, follow the words and story from left to right and top to bottom, and run their finger under the words while reading.

- Give your child a variety of reading materials such as books, magazines, newspapers, etc. If your child is exposed to a variety of print-rich materials, he or she will more likely see that reading is everywhere and reading is important.
- Teach your child the alphabet. First, your child should be able to sing the alphabet song. Then, your child should be able to say the alphabet. Once your child says the alphabet, you may want to lay out the plastic letters in the kit in alphabetical order. Have your child touch the letter when he or she says the letter name.
- Use the plastic letters and explore what they look like. Talk about letters with and without holes, straight-line letters, letters with curves, letters with corners, and letters with lines that cross.
- Sort the plastic letters so your child becomes familiar with the shape of letters. Some sorting ideas are listed below, but don't try them all at once. Instead, try one a day:
  - Sort the vowels and consonants.
  - Sort letters with circles (or part circles).
  - Match upper case-letters with lower-case letters.
- Use the links in this kit to make the shapes of letters in the alphabet. Hook the links together to make a letter *t* or *l*. Start with straight-line letters, which are easy to construct. Then, move on to letters with rounded ends. You may have to help your child with some of the more challenging letters such as *b* or *g*.
- Put the plastic letters that spell your child's name in one of the cups. Have your child pull out the letters to spell his or her name. Do this daily. When your child is comfortable with the exercise, add some letters to the bowl that are NOT in your

child's name. See if your child can determine which letters are used and which are not.

- Make an ABC Scrapbook. Staple 26 sheets of paper together. Label each sheet with a letter of the alphabet, starting with A. Have your child look through magazines and cut out pictures. Have your child alphabetically match pictures with scrapbook pages (a picture of an elephant goes with page E, and so on), and glue the pictures onto the appropriate pages. This is a project that can keep on growing until the pages are full; there is always room for more pictures in the scrapbook.
- Take a “Letter Walk” around your house. Put the plastic letters in the cups or in a bowl. Stand in your kitchen or any room in the house. Pull a letter out, and tell your child the name of the letter and its sound (or, have your child tell you the name and the sound). Look around the room and see how many things you can find that start with the letter you selected. Say the names of the things you find. You can then move to another room and repeat the exercise, or you can stay in the same room and select a different letter to find other items.
- Put the plastic letters in a bowl. Have your child pick a letter out of the bowl, and name the letter and the sound it makes. Next, roll one die. Whatever number the die rolls is the number of words your child must say that start with that letter sound. Take turns playing this game and make sure you (the adult) play the game as well to model letter-sound associations for your child. Your child can also think of words and attempt to write them. You can use the white board or a piece of paper and a pencil.

## Writing Skills

To become skilled, lifelong writers, children need lots of support and encouragement during the preschool and kindergarten years. Most children will “play” at writing, simply scribbling, drawing,

or doing “pretend writing.” Always ask children what they’ve written and praise them for their efforts to write. The activities listed below will have your child writing in many ways.

- Use the white board and have your child write his or her name. You can also have your child write the ABC’s.
- Find a place in your home to display your child’s writing. Whether it be scribble writing, drawings, or any attempts to write a message, display the work so your child can see that his or her writing is important.
- Use the plastic alphabet letters and put them in one of the sorting bowls. Have a piece of paper and a crayon, pencil, or marker ready for your child to use (or use the white board). Have your child close his or her eyes and take a letter out of the bowl. Your child should put the letter next to the paper. Ask your child to try and write the letter selected from the bowl. Once your child has written that letter, choose another letter and keep writing more and more letters.
- Give your child lots and lots of opportunities to write his or her name. Many preschools teach children to write their names using all capital letters. Most kindergarten teachers will instruct children to write their names with only the first letter capitalized and the remaining letters in lower case. This is a good thing to keep in mind when helping your child learn how to write his or her name. Use the plastic alphabet letters to spell your child’s name. This model may help your child to memorize the correct letters.
- As your child learns more and more about writing and literacy skills, remember to always focus on what the child CAN do. The more praise you give for your child’s efforts and attempts, the greater self-confidence your child will show in the area of writing.
- Use the animal picture cards with the green border. Pull out an

animal card and ask your child to write down the letter that begins that animal's name. For example, if your child has a frog card, ask your child to write the letter *f*. (You can use the white board for this activity, or pencil and paper.)

- Spell words using the plastic alphabet letters and have your child copy what you spelled. Start off by using familiar words such as family-member names, or easy words such as cat, TV, me, etc.

## Math Skills

Before entering kindergarten, your child should be exposed to experiences that involve counting, patterning, sorting, and using numbers. You can encourage mathematical thinking by talking about numbers on a daily basis. Count the stairs as you walk up and down them, count crackers as you eat them, count plates as you set the table, and play games. Involving your child in the activities listed below will ensure a solid foundation of math skills in preparation for kindergarten.

- Take out the pet counters and the sorting cups. Sort the pet counters by color. Put all the red pets in the red cup, blue pets in the blue cup, and so on. Count how many pets you have in each bowl. You can sort with the color links in the same way.
- Sort as part of daily activities in your home. Have your child help sort the laundry, socks, groceries, silverware, and so much more.
- Use the pet counters (or links) and make a pattern of *red, blue, red, blue, red, blue*. Touch each counter and say the color. Talk to your child about how the colors repeat. Say that this is a pattern. Use different color counters to make more patterns. After your child is successful at making patterns with two colors, you can make patterns with three colors or patterns such as *red, red, blue, red, red, blue, red, red, blue*.
- Play "What Color Is Next." Make a simple two-color pattern

using the pet counters or the links. Give your child a handful of counters in a variety of colors. Ask your child, “What color comes next in the pattern?” See if your child can put the correct color counter at the end of the pattern to extend the pattern. Always encourage your child to point to the counter and say the name of the color.

- Use the attribute blocks to learn about shapes. Have your child sort the blocks according to shape and then according to color. Have your child name the shapes. Work on this many times.
- Use the plastic numbers in the kit. Have your child put the numbers in ascending order. You may need to write the numbers in order (on the white board or on a piece of paper) and have your child use this as a guideline to understanding numerical order.
- Use the small white board and a write-on/wipe-off crayon or dry-erase marker. Write a number on the board and have your child try and copy the number. If your child struggles with number identification, work on numbers 1, 2, and 3 for several days. Then, slowly introduce 4 and 5 (in addition to 1, 2, and 3). As your child masters number identification, continue to add more numbers for your child to identify.
- Use the plastic numbers and the colored links. Set out a plastic number and have your child tell you the number (such as six). Then, have your child pick out six links (any color) and match them to the plastic number. Continue using all of the numbers, setting up piles of links next to each digit.
- Use the dice to learn about numbers, counting, and more. Have your child roll the dice and count the dots, write down this number on the white board. Play this game with one die, and then use two dice as the child begins to master counting and number recognition.

- Play games using dice and counters. Put 30 links in a pile. Take turns rolling the dice and taking that many links. Hook the links together to make a chain. The next person rolls and does the same thing. Keep rolling and adding links to your chain. Roll until all the links are gone. Next, compare lengths of the chains you made. The person with the longest chain is the winner!
- Use the links to learn about size and relationships. Make a chain of 10 links hooked together. Have your child walk around the house to find items that are the same length as the link chain. Your child should find as many things as possible that are equal to 10 links. Change this activity each time you do it. For example, hook together 15 links and have your child find things in your house that are longer than 15 links (or shorter than 15 links).

## Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

Thinking and problem-solving skills include logic, reasoning, critical thinking, and creative thinking. Learning to solve problems should start very early in life. Children should be exposed to games, activities, puzzles, and experiences that encourage them to think and solve problems in critical and creative ways.

- Use the story-starter picture cards with the orange border from the kit. Ask your child logical questions such as:
  - What are the people doing?
  - What is alive in this picture?
  - What do you think the people might be saying?
  - What would happen if...?

- Use the pet counters and have your child pull out one of the pets from a cup. With the white board, have your child try and draw that animal. Talk about the attributes of the animal first, so your child can try to include specific details in the drawing.
- Play “I’m Thinking of a Shape.” Use the attribute shape blocks and hide one behind your back. Encourage your child to ask you questions to determine which shape you are hiding, including questions about the attributes of the shape, such as, “Does it have corners?”
- Use the attribute shape blocks. Have your child choose one shape. Take that shape, lay it on a piece of paper, and trace around the shape. Remove the shape from the paper and have your child create something from the tracing. For example, if you traced a square, turn the square into a house; a circle can become the head of a cat; and a triangle can become a sail on a boat. This is a fun activity that can be done repeatedly with shapes, lines, or squiggles.

## Creative Skills











Every child is born with creative potential. Parents should promote children with experiences that stimulate creativity. At the preschool age, children learn by playing and engaging in fun and creative activities. Exposing your child to music, drama, and other creative arts will serve to develop the creative side of a unique personality.

- Give your child opportunities to simply play with the items in the kit. This free exploration and playtime will have great benefits as your child explores items independently. In the long run, your child will be more willing to work with the items if opportunities have been provided to explore them first.

- Provide art activities for your child. Drawing, coloring, playing with clay, painting, etc., are all important experiences for your child. Although these can be messy activities, they are essential things to do before entering kindergarten.
- Use the story-starter picture cards with the orange border in the kit. Pick one card and have one person begin to tell a story about the picture card. This first person should only *start* the story, not tell a whole story. Have someone else say the next part of the story as a continuation of the first person's introduction. Continue on until everyone has had a chance to tell part of the story. Decide as a group how the story should end. This is a great activity for long car rides with the whole family, or as a one-on-one activity with your child.
- Set up a grocery store in your house by using real canned goods and other food to put in the store. Act out shopping and purchasing. Use pre-reading skills to find things on a grocery list and use writing skills to write the list. Make price tags for the food, or roll the dice to decide how much something costs. Use the links as your money to pay for items in your store. The possibilities are endless!
- Play a silly game with your child, such as "Clap your hands behind your back," "Hop like a frog," or "Walk backwards." After giving the directions, roll the dice. Whatever number the dice lands on is the number of times your child should perform the given direction. Be creative in your direction commands. Kids love to be silly!
- Use the beanbag as an accessory to role play. Give your child the beanbag, and then say, "Make the beanbag a hat" or "Make the beanbag a pizza." See how your child can turn an ordinary object into something pretend.



# Checklist

-  **Social Skills**
-  **Self-Help Skills**
-  **Speaking Skills**
-  **Listening Skills**
-  **Fine Motor Skills**
-  **Gross Motor Skills**
-  **Literacy (Reading & Writing) Skills**
-  **Math Skills**
-  **Thinking & Problem-Solving Skills**
-  **Creative Skills**

