

## Top 20 things you can help your child to do before starting school

1. **Toileting themselves.** Support your child in being able to manage their toileting during the school day, successfully cleaning and dressing themselves afterwards. Ensure that they automatically wash their hands afterwards. Consider prompts in the toilet to help remind them such as a picture of hands being washed.
2. **Dressing and undressing.** Children will need on occasions to dress and undress in school for activities such as PE and this includes putting on their coats and zipping them up. Practise buttons and zips on any items of clothing and give your child time to practise before doing it for them. Again ensure your children can recognise which foot to put each shoe on and can put on their new school shoes and uniform independently. The flip trick is great for helping to put on their coats!
3. **Feeding themselves.** Again supporting your child with eating can be both encouraging and time saving. Ensure that your child feeds themselves and if possible uses a knife and fork to cut and eat their food. Eating together to model the process and talking to ensure it is an enjoyable time can help reduce anxieties that may exist at meal time. Encourage your child to help you set the table/ clear away afterwards. Can they help you prepare the meal? Practise having lunch with their new lunchbox- can they open their lunchbox, water bottle etc. independently?
4. **Sleep and routines.** Support your child in getting into a good routine of sleeping making sure they get enough sleep, going to bed at a regular time and leaving enough time in the morning for them to practise dressing themselves and completing their routine independently.
5. **Tidying up and looking after their belongings.** Encourage your child to support with tidying up after using their toys, making sure if a range of toys are used that they all go back to their relevant homes. Looking after their belongings. When children take off their cardigan, shoes etc. at home, encourage them to return them to one place as they will need to in the classroom. Encourage children to hold their own belongings for a little while and to find things for themselves at home.
6. **Recognising their name.** Write your child's name on a number of different pieces of paper and place around the house, encourage them to point to their name and say it out loud each time they see it. Overtime add other familiar names and words around it, one at a time such as Mummy, Daddy, Nanny and so on. Encourage your child to find their name among the other words. Once they have got the hand of this, change the position of the words, can they still find their name? This will help them in the busy classroom to find their coat peg and draw with ease as well as self-registration. Please write your child's name with a capital letter at the beginning but the rest of the letters should be lowercase. Label their new uniform with their name and show them what it looks like.
7. **Name writing.** Practise writing their name regularly.
8. **Listen to a story.** Read to your child regularly and encourage them to listen carefully. Don't be afraid to re-read classics or favourites and overtime encourage your child to retell the story alongside you.
9. **Speaking.** Encourage your children to respond to you in more than one word. At first you may need to say the full sentence back to the child, overtime they will begin to build the number of words they use in a string although it may not be a full sentence for a while. If they mispronounce something then do not tell them it is wrong, instead model it correctly. For example, if your child says 'I want a nana,' you could reply, 'ok would you like a banana?'
10. **Contact with school.** Play/attend as many sessions as possible both in school or virtually to help your child feel comfortable in the setting and with staff.

11. **Induction tasks.** Complete induction tasks set by school with your child although allow them to complete most of the task independently. This will give them confidence when talking about it in school and help them develop independence.
12. **Reading books about starting school.** Consider purchasing some books about starting school to read with your child. This may help alleviate and anxieties and help them to understand what to expect.
13. **Ask and answer questions.** As you are out and about, ask your child questions to promote thinking about the world around them. Encourage them to look deeper at what they see and why it might be there or doing something. Take the time to listen to your child's questions and answer them the best you can. Remember it's ok to say you don't know or we can find out together.
14. **Social starters.** If times allow support your child in making friends when in a social situation. Give them sentence starters to say to other children such as "Hello, what is your name?" and "Do you want to come and play with me?"
15. **Sharing and turn taking.** Play plenty of board games to encourage turn taking. You can even do this with over family members over video conferencing, supporting the other player with their moves. Sharing toys with siblings and even clearing out old toys to give to charity or put out the front for others to take.
16. **Acts of kindness.** Complete little acts of kindness that encourage your child to think about others and show concern for others outside of their immediate family. This could be baking, making a card, or calling someone to check on them or cheer them up.
17. **Fine motor skills.** Practise activities that will strengthen the muscles in their hands to help get them ready for writing. These may be activities such as threading, playdough, making Lego models, using scissors or even, colouring and writing using a pencil.
18. **Counting.** Practise counting whether it be climbing the stairs or laying the table for dinner.
19. **Recognising numbers.** Look at numbers and point to numbers to 10 when counting. Point out numbers in the environment such as door numbers when on a local walk.
20. **Following instructions.** Give your child a number of instructions to follow. Start with a simple instruction and then increase to giving them two or three things to complete in one go. Baking and following recipes can help children to learn these skills.