

What is school readiness?

School readiness refers to whether a child is ready to make an easy and successful transition into school. While many people think of academics (eg. writing their name or counting to 10) as the important school readiness skills, school readiness actually refers to a much broader range of skills including self care (eg. independent toileting), attention and concentration, physical skills, emotional regulation, language skills and play and social skills.

Why are school readiness skills important?

The development of school readiness skills allows school teachers to further develop a child's skills. Without these basic skills already established upon entry to school, children can very quickly find themselves playing 'catch up' compared to their peers that are advancing more quickly. Students that begin school with the building block skills in place advance quickly compared to those that don't.



What are the building blocks necessary to develop school readiness?

- **Self Regulation:** The ability to obtain, maintain and change emotion, behaviour, attention and activity level appropriate for a task or situation (eg. not throwing a tantrum when they are unhappy).
- **Sensory processing:** Accurate processing of sensory stimulation that influences attention and learning. This affects how you sit, hold a pencil and listen to the teacher.
- **Receptive language (understanding):** Comprehension of spoken language (eg. the teachers instructions).
- **Expressive language (using language):** Producing speech or language that can be understood by others.
- **Executive functioning:** Higher order reasoning and thinking skills (eg. What do I need to pack to take to school?).
- **Social skills:** The ability to engage in interaction with others (either verbally or non-verbally), to compromise with others and to be able to recognise and follow social norms.
- **Planning and sequencing:** The ability to perform sequential multi-step tasks (eg. completing a cut-and-paste task or following a set of instructions).

How can I tell if my child has problems with school readiness?

If a child has difficulties with school readiness they might:

- Get easily frustrated when expectations are placed upon them.
- Struggle to follow instructions in daily activities.
- Rely on parents to do self care tasks, such as dressing, eating or toileting.
- Struggle to pay attention to tasks as long as their peers.
- Be socially immature (eg. unable to share, uncontrolled behaviour when unhappy).
- Have difficulty understanding consequences of their behaviours.
- Not interact well with their peers (either in or out of the classroom).
- Be resistant to new activities and/or being guided about how to develop new skills.

What can be done to improve school readiness skills?

In the lead up to school start, the following activities can be helpful:

- **Parenting expectations:** Increase expectations of the child around self care tasks such as dressing, toileting, eating, and getting ready to leave the house. Provide only verbal rather than physical 'help' to complete the tasks where possible.
- **Social skills:** Encourage the child to develop relationships with other (unfamiliar) children of a similar age, and arrange suitable 'play dates' for social interaction practice where the adults actively facilitate this play practice.
- **Books:** Expose the child to books to prepare them for literacy so they learn to enjoy and sit through the entirety of a book.
- **Early preparation:** Start preparing the child for school by talking about expectations at school, appropriate behaviour, and regularly engaging in 'sit down' activities.
- **Collaboration:** Work with the child's preschool teacher to identify any areas of slow development so that these areas can be targeted *before* the child starts school.
- **Visual strategies:** Use visuals (such as picture schedules) to help the child understand the routine of their day both at home and at kindergarten.
- **Fine motor skill development:** This is an area that will be a large part of the activities undertaken at school, so developing these skills will enable the child to participate in activities much more easily and willingly. This means they should practice cutting, colouring, drawing, and writing their name.

