

Preparing Your Child for Nursery

The period before a child starts nursery can be an anxious time for parents. This information has been put together as a simple guide to how you can best prepare your child for this exciting time in their lives!

Promoting Independence

Your child will really benefit from being as independent as possible when they start attending nursery. Of course teaching staff will always be on hand to help but children feel a real sense of achievement when they can accomplish things by themselves! For example, your child will have access to an outdoor space throughout the day so being able to put their coat on and zip it up independently will really help them. It also means that they can get straight to their playing and learning without having to stop and ask an adult for help! Your child will also really benefit from having experience of spending some time away from you, such as going to a playgroup or a friend's house to play. This will really develop their confidence and independence and stand them in good stead when it comes to saying goodbye on that first session at nursery.

Communication & Language

Many parents worry if their child will be able to tell the teacher when they need something or if they will make friends. Good communication skills will allow them to do these things.

Listening & Attention Skills

Your child will be given many spoken instructions throughout their time at

nursery and will need to be able to shift their attention from what they are doing to listen to what the teacher is saying. A lovely activity to promote this is to go on a 'listening walk' where your child listens for all the sounds around them in the park or town centre. You could also jot down all the sounds your child notices and talk about these back at home to retell the journey based on the sounds they heard.

Understanding

Classroom instructions often contain several parts for children to remember. A simple game of 'Simon Says' could really help your child with this. You could give instructions containing two parts e.g. 'Simon says touch your nose, then clap your hands'. It's a good idea to start off with one step instructions and gradually build up to two or even three.

Vocabulary

To help develop your child's vocabulary you could play sorting games. For example, when packing a suitcase or bag, as this is a great way to help word categorisation, which is important for vocabulary learning. Items can be sorted into different piles such as clothing, toys and shoes.

Outdoor 'treasure hunts' work well too. Collecting objects found on walks in the park or on the beach help introduce new types of vocabulary such as describing

words. Treasure can also then be used to create feely bags, where objects have to be described by the way they feel before revealing what the object is.

Reading & Writing

Having good sound awareness skills such as rhyming and identifying what sound a word begins with is a great foundation for reading. Sharing songs

and stories which rhyme is a really good way to support this.

You could also say the sounds that letters make, along with their names as you come across them day to day.

Additionally, showing objects with your child's name on will help them to

recognise their name.

A good foundation to being able to write is to develop your child's fine motor skills. This is because good fine motor skills enable a child to hold a pencil firmly as they are writing. Threading is also a great way to develop

Social Skills

Being able to interact appropriately with other children and share resources is a key skill that will really help your child when they start nursery. Meeting with other children at play groups or with family and friends will help to promote these skills.

You could also join in with pretend play modelling useful social phrases such as 'my turn please' or 'let's share'.

fine motor skills, whether it is with beads or buttons, or making necklaces out of dried pasta.

Playing with playdough or weaving wool around a cardboard template are also other simple activities that you could do at home.

Mathematical Development

Counting Verbally & One to One

Being able to count verbally to at least 10 will be of great benefit to a child starting nursery. Practise counting up to ten, and backwards too.

One to one counting can also be done incidentally throughout the day, for example counting steps as your child climbs the stairs.

You can count anything, for example: How many lampposts are on the street? How many houses have a red door? How many pieces of fruit are in the bowl (and how many did we have yesterday)?

To help your child understand what numbers mean, ask them to find the same amount of different items. For example, find 3 spoons, 3 hats, or 3 socks. You can also sing counting songs.

Shape, Size & Quantity

You could go on a shape hunt to see how many circles, squares, rectangles and triangles your child can find. You could look for patterns too.

Talk about the shape and size of objects, e.g. big car, little car, round ball, square table, rectangular book and ask your child questions such as 'Can you pass me the biggest box?', or 'Which one is the smallest shoe?'.

Play with blocks – encourage your child to think about size, colour and shape. Also play with containers – how many socks can you fit in the box? Which container holds the most, or the least, sand/water/beads etc.

Number Recognition

A number hunt is a fun way to look for numerals on doors, buses, cars, signs, at home, at the shops or on TV. You could likewise play 'I spy' but with numbers.

You could also watch number themed programmes with your child. For example, you could sing along and learn all about numbers with the Numberblocks on CBeebies.