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Is Your Child Ready For Preschool

By Jonathon Hardcastle

Parents know that children do not always follow the experts when it comes to physical and intellectual development. As the closest observers of their individual child's temperament and abilities, parents are the best judges on whether a child is ready for an academic preschool program.

An academic preschool program differs from a daycare program in that it focuses on early learning skills, pre-reading readiness and linguistic development. While there is time for free play, preschool is a learning rather than care giving environment. In past times, preschool programs were designed for children who stayed home with a parent. Children attended preschool two or three mornings a week, spending the rest of the time at home. Today, because so many parents work, preschools have been restructured to full-day programs.

However, many children in the two to three year old age group may not be emotionally mature enough for a full-day academic experience. Younger children frequently get tired and upset after too much stimulation and many still need an afternoon nap. In this case, parents should seek a program that offers academic experiences in the morning and play time, naptime and other, less structured, activities for the rest of the day.

At three, the age most children begin preschool, children have developed the ability to speak in short sentences. At this age, adults can understand about three quarters of the words children say. A functional level of verbal ability can help a child more easily navigate preschool as he or she can ask for help, to use the toilet, or whatever else they may need.

Most schools require that children attending preschool be toilet trained. The consistent ability to use the bathroom during the day is an important part of preschool readiness. While teachers are accepting of accidents, they are teachers and not daycare providers and can't be expected to change diapers. Additionally, children should know how to pull down and pull up their undergarments and to wash and dry their own hands.

Children should also have mastered basic life skills before beginning preschool. Snacks are definitely served at preschool and often lunch is served as well. Your child should be able to manage finger

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foods and use a regular cup without a spout in order to manage preschool meals. Also, they should be able to put on their own shoes and coat although teachers at this level fully expect to help with buttons and zippers.

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Saving Money on Preschool: Readiness Skills Needed for Kindergarten

By Michelle Jones

As a mom of 4 who's youngest child is about to start Kindergarten this Fall, I'd like to share with you some things I've learned about Preschool over the last ten years, along with a list of readiness skills every child can be learning at home – whether attending Preschool or not.

Preschools, especially those taught in a church environment, are a wonderful resource that help prepare children for regular school. Not to mention they also provide social interaction with children of the same age, and for a few hours each week, a much-needed break for Mom. Overall, we highly recommend them!

There's just one catch – Preschool is expensive!

Though I truly enjoyed successfully homeschooling our first child for preschool in 1994, by the time our next child was ready for preschool (in 1998) I also had a toddler at home (our third child), and another shortly on the way. My husband and I decided it was definitely time for some help, and somehow we managed to put our second child through preschool, as well as the third. And the fourth – as I've already mentioned, will be graduating this year.

If you'd like to send your child to Preschool but would like to keep the costs down, try finding a school that offers just two days a week, that's what we did. Of course homeschooling would cost even less, but we realize that's not an option for everyone – especially working moms.

Whether you choose to home-preschool your child or send him/her to a local Preschool on a part-time basis, here's a suggested list of academic, physical and social skills every preschooler should be learning. If your child will be attending Kindergarten in the fall it would be a good idea to continue working on these things over the summer. Kindergarten is a lot tougher than it was even a few years

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ago, so the more prepared your child is the better off he/she will be!

You will find that Kindergarten Readiness lists will vary but this is a great list that covers the basics.

Academic Skills Say the alphabet Recognize own name, and letters in name Recognize as many letters as possible (A–Z) Count to 10 Recognize numbers 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 Count items Name the basic colors (blue, red, yellow, purple, green, orange, white, brown, black)

Physical Skills Care for personal needs (Use restroom, wash hands, fasten clothes, wipe nose, etc.) Catch item tossed underhand Walk up and down stairs Use pencils and crayons Use scissors & glue stick Stack blocks Put toys and class items where they belong

Social Skills (These are always a work in progress!) Shares and takes turns Sits quietly and listens in group setting Follows directions Demonstrates good manners while eating Respects other students and adults Respects other's belongings and class items Expresses thoughts and feelings clearly

And a Note About Reading.

Depending on your local school system, children now begin reading in either Preschool or Kindergarten. It is very important that your child be familiar with the letters of the alphabet and if possible, even the sounds each one makes. Knowing the letters will make the transition to reading much easier.

Throughout the early school years, teachers will often remind you how important it is to read to your children every day. You can make it a special time by letting the child choose the book to be read, and ask them questions about the story as you go – this will also help them develop good comprehension skills, which are needed throughout life.

Enjoy these early years together, they grow up so fast!

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Michelle Jones, author of *Dealing with Debt* and publisher of *Living a Better Life: The Money–Saving Tips Ezine*, is a frugal mother of 4 who's dedicated to helping families live a better life, not by spending more money, but less! If you'd like a free subscription to her monthly Ezine please visit

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