

Is my child ready for preschool?

We are often asked, “how do I know if my child is ready to attend preschool?”

There are many signs you can look for to know when your child is ready to attend The Children’s School. The Children’s School is very lucky to offer a small class ratio (12:1), which is why we find this a very good question when parents ask! Over the past 20 years, we have observed and witnessed different stages of readiness and while every child is different, we have compiled a list of some things to look for and/or include in your everyday practical life to help prepare your child for learning in a group setting. A lot of times, we as parents overlook or don’t notice some of the small details that can truly help all of our students thrive in our classroom. If each child is “ready” when they come on the first day of school, imagine the growth and skill development that will shine in our classroom!

This list is specifically made for The Children’s School for parents to help prepare their children for their first day of school. Did you find yourself saying “nope, not there yet” to several bullet points? That’s okay!! Please use this list as a guide for you in your home as soon as you add your child to our waitlist. These skills will develop over time!

- 1) Child is out of diapers/pullups and can manage his/her own trips to the bathroom successfully. *Your child should be able to use the restroom and wash hands without assistance before school begins. Practice makes perfect, so reinforce these skills in the months before the first day of school.*
- 2) Child is able to properly feed him/herself with utensils. *Give your child the opportunity to practice this at every meal! Praise their effort and continue giving them exploration time with utensils daily.*
- 3) Child can follow 2 step directions from an adult (other than their parent). *This skill can be easy and fun to practice. Begin asking them to do slightly complex tasks that may require the child to think and plan. You might say “Please go get the blue basket from the kitchen and bring it to me.” If they need a little help, just walk through the steps with them. “What should we do first? That’s right, first let’s go to the kitchen.” Praise their hard work in*

following through with the task. Also have someone who lives outside your home practice this skill with them.

- 4) Child is able to tolerate small levels of frustration while working or playing. *Challenge your child in games, toys, anything! It is okay to see them frustrated - be sure to let them know you see they are frustrated and that it is okay to feel that way. They can keep trying or come back to the activity and try again later.*
- 5) Child can verbally ask for help and get his/her needs met most of the time. As a parent, you may be able to anticipate your child's needs before they ask, but they will need to be able to use words to speak to their teacher at school. *Practice by showing them how to use words to ask for what they need. If they hand you their yogurt to open, show them how to say "Can you open this, please?" Talk about how we use words to help others know what we want.*
- 6) Child can separate from a parent. The transition to Preschool will be much easier if it isn't the first time your child has ever been away from you. It's normal for 3 and 4-year-olds to cry when left in an unfamiliar setting, but does your child have the ability to calm down and enjoy the new experience after a while? A great way to practice this with grandparents! Start out with short visits and gradually work to longer visits assuring your child that you will return.
- 7) Child is reasonably healthy. Consistent attendance is key to children feeling comfortable and confident in the school environment as well as the relationships there.
- 8) Child is able to spend several hours a day interacting with small and large groups of children. While The Children's School is only made up of 12 students, it is important to our philosophy to have some children work together! One of the great things is that our older students often are role models to the younger students - they often will work with them and guide them with their lessons. *Practice group work by simply exposing your children to different size group activities. Play at the park and invite other kids to explore or examine a really cool piece of bark you found!*

9) Child is able to pay attention for short periods of time to adult-directed tasks. The children will be expected to focus on short lessons and then they will be able to demonstrate them on their own doing one activity until they feel ready to move on. *Practice this at home by demonstrating a simple practical skill and allowing them to try it after you!*

10) Child is able to work independently at times. At The Children's School students have a lot of freedom to choose activities that best fit their learning needs and desires each day. But, they will still need to show some independence. This is an easy skill to practice at home!

Explain to your child that they are going to practice playing on their own without coming to you for help for a set amount of time. This could be as short as a few minutes, depending on her level of independence. Set a timer. Gradually increase the amount of time until she can play independently for at least 10 minutes. Celebrate with them when they succeed.

11) Child has begun to share with others. Of course, three and four-year-olds are still perfecting these skills, but it is important that they have some practice. *Try informal meetups with friends or with a local parents' group to play simple board games that encourage taking turns.*

12) Child is able to follow rules.

13) Child can speak in complete sentences of at least 5-6 words and be understood.

Equally important as the ability to speak up to communicate is the ability to be understood. Can adults other than his parents understand the majority of what your child says? *If you're not sure, ask a grandparent, friend, or another objective third party to observe your child speak. How much are they able to understand?*

*If adults other than their primary caregivers have difficulty understanding the majority of your child's speech by age three, be sure to bring it up with their pediatrician. It's possible they may need more intervention in case of a speech delay. **This would not keep your child from enrolling in The Children's School, but a formal evaluation and***

diagnosis could help them get the support they need in school. We believe in being proactive. We ask that all new students have an evaluation done by your local school district during the summer before your child starts school. This allows us to have time to prepare and make arrangements for any extra services that we can provide.

14) Child can answer simple yes or no questions.

Practice this at home by engaging in conversation with your child and ask them lots of questions. "Did you like the pizza we had for lunch today? Should we have cheese and grapes for a snack today?" Demonstrate this as a family while you interact in your daily activities.

15) Child can actively listen to stories.

We all know 3 and 4-year-olds are always on the move, but they will often listen to short read-alouds or listen while the directress gives instructions. You can practice this by just reading stories! Lots of stories! Or try playing School at home. Make it fun by setting up a "classroom" area. Pretend to be the teacher and ask your child to practice getting ready for Big Kid School by listening while you read a story. Then turn it around and ask him to be the teacher while you sit and listen. He will love the fun game and it will help develop his listening skills! You can also attend library story times!

16) Child makes eye contact with others.

17) Child responds when called by name.

18) Child is familiar with a crayon, marker, or pencil.