

Preschool Readiness

What is preschool readiness?

Preschool readiness (which can also be called kindergarten readiness) refers to a child's readiness to make a smooth and successful transition and integration into the preschool environment and its routines and expectation, whether this is a preschool, kindergarten, kinder, or ELC (Early Learning Centre) environment. These skill expectations include social, language, play, physical and self care abilities which, when well established, make learning easy from both the teachers and the children. With a little bit of active planning, parents can really help to nurture preschool readiness.



Why is preschool readiness important?

The development of the building block skills for preschool readiness allows preschool teachers to expand and further develop a child's skills in the areas of social interaction, play, language, emotional development, physical skills, early literacy and numeracy and fine motor skills. The basic establishment of these

skills in advance of entry to the preschool program typically affords the child a more successful entry to the preschool environment.

This can reflect social interaction in making and keeping friends, self care skills (such as toileting independence and being able to manage their lunchbox independently), emotional regulation to demonstrate age appropriate responses to frustration and to control tantrums, competent physical skills as the play they engage in when interacting with their peers (both independently and alone) as well as language skills for both listening (e.g. to group play instructions) as well as talking (with their friends).

What are the building blocks necessary to develop preschool readiness?

- **Self regulation:** The ability to obtain, maintain and change emotion, behaviour, attention and activity level appropriate for a task or situation.
- **Sensory processing:** Accurate processing of sensory stimulation in the environment as well as in one's own body which effects attention, behaviour and learning.
- **Receptive language (understanding):** Comprehension of spoken language (vocabulary, instructions, questions, concepts) for group instructions as well as peer interaction.
- **Expressive language (using language):** Formulating sentences that have age appropriate grammar (e.g. using pronouns 'he/she' correctly) and word order, using specific vocabulary, and telling a simple story.
- **Articulation:** The ability to clearly pronounce individual sounds in words and sentences.
- **Executive Functioning:** Higher order reasoning and thinking skills (e.g. working out how to make the desired building, collecting the materials and overcoming challenges in the process).
- **Emotional development/regulation:** The ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions and regulate emotions. It also means responding age appropriately to a frustration and managing to 'contain' tantrums or recovering quickly from an upset.
- **Social skills:** Determined by the ability to engage in reciprocal 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 sequential multi-step task/activity

performance to achieve a well-defined result.

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

If a child has difficulties with preschool readiness they might:

- Get easily frustrated when expectations are placed upon them.
- Struggle to follow instructions in daily activities.
- Rely on parents/teachers to perform self care tasks for them (e.g. dressing, hygiene).
- Not be toilet trained (day time).
- Be socially immature.
- Have poor understanding of simple questions (who, what, where).
- Struggle with formulating sentences.
- Respond in only short sentences to questions.
- Be difficult to understand (due to poor articulation or use of words).
- Have a difficulty understanding consequences of their behaviours.
- Not be interested in looking at books and/or doing sit down activities.
- Not interact well or easily with their peers.
- Have limited play skills (short duration, narrow range, find it difficult to play alone and/or with peers).
- Not be willing to engage in new activities and/or to be guided about how to develop new skills.

What other problems can occur when a child has preschool readiness difficulties?

When a child has preschool readiness difficulties, they might also have difficulties with:

- **Self regulation:** The ability to obtain, maintain and change one's emotion, behaviour, attention and activity level appropriate for a task or situation in a socially acceptable manner.
- **Receptive language (understanding):** The ability to follow instructions, understand basic concepts (e.g. 'big/little, in/on/under/next to'), understand questions ('who, what, where, when, why'), and understand vocabulary.

- **Expressive language (using language):** Communicating their wants, needs, thoughts and ideas (either verbally or through other ways such as Key Word Sign).
- **Executive functioning:** Higher level reasoning and thinking skills (e.g. simple problem solving, understanding cause, predicting).
- **Emotional development/regulation:** The ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions and to regulate emotions (e.g to contain tantrums in response to an upset).
- **Social skills:** The ability to engage in reciprocal interaction with others (either verbally or non-verbally), to compromise with others, and be able to recognize and follow social norms (e.g. take turns in a game, wait for a turn to talk, respond to a social greeting).
- **Planning and sequencing:** The sequential multi-step task or activity performance to achieve a well-defined result (e.g a construction task such 'copy this' Duplo building).
- **Self care skills:** Such as dressing and toileting independently (or at least developing).
- **Gross motor skills:** Whole body physical skills using the core strength muscles of the trunk, arms, legs such as running, jumping and ball skills.
- **Fine motor skills:** Finger and hand skills such as writing, cutting, opening lunch boxes, playing with play doh and using tweezers to retrieve small objects for finger strengthening.

What can be done to improve preschool readiness skills?

In advance of the transition into the preschool environment:

- **Parenting expectations:** Increase expectations of the child around self care tasks such as dressing, toileting, eating, and getting ready to go out of the house.
- **Social skills:** Encourage the child to develop relationships with known and unfamiliar children of a similar age.
- **Books:** Expose the child to books to prepare them for sitting and listening to stories as part of group time at preschool.
- **Early preparation:** Start preparing the child for preschool at the age of 3 by talking about expectations at preschool/kindy, appropriate behaviour, sit down activities.

- **Collaboration:** Work with the child's child care educators (if in child care) to identify any signs of deficit or slow development so that these areas can be targeted *before* the child starts preschool/kindergarten
- **Visual strategies:** Use visuals, such as picture schedules, to help the child understand the routine of their day both at home and at preschool/kindergarten.
- **Outings:** Prepare the child for group excursions when at preschool/kindergarten by going to places such as the library, the zoo, the shopping centre, the post office and help the child to understand appropriate behaviour in these environments.
- **Fine motor skills:** This is an area that will be a large part of the activities undertaken at preschool, so developing these skills will enable the child to participate in activities much more easily and willingly.

What activities can help improve preschool readiness skills?

There are many simple activities that parents and teachers can do to help prepare a child for preschool.

Suggested *Preschool Readiness Preparation Tasks and Activities* are outlined in [this helpful table](#).

Why should I seek therapy if I notice difficulties with preschool readiness in my child?

Therapeutic intervention to help a child with preschool readiness difficulties is important to:

- Support them to feel confident following instructions and understanding spoken information.
- Help them to make friends and feel confident when communicating.
- Support social skills to allow the child be comfortable meeting new people and playing with others, as well parents feeling comfortable taking children to new environments.
- Help them follow routines and complete unfamiliar tasks that may be challenging.
- Identify the areas of breakdown if it is unclear what the specific area of

difficulty is but there is a sense that they are struggling with their learning, communication, behaviour, gross or fine motor skills and/or social interaction.

- Discover fun, innovative ways to help the child to develop an understanding of the skill areas required.
- Ensure the child has the necessary building block skills needed for success in their fine motor and gross motor skills.

If left untreated what can difficulties with preschool readiness lead to?

When children have difficulties with preschool/kindy readiness, they are might also have difficulties with:

- Participating in group based activities and following instructions because their attention and listening is poor and they may also have language difficulties.
- Peer rejection and social isolation.
- Difficulties following instructions from others.
- Poor school readiness and academic skill development as the child may be in a negative state that is not conducive to learning and thus may not have gained the most out of their preschool/kindy experience.
- Not only does a child become stressed and anxious as they realise their limitations, but also the parents.

What type of therapy is recommended for preschool/kindy readiness difficulties?

If your child has difficulties with preschool readiness, it is recommended they consult an Occupational Therapist and/or a Speech Pathologist to address the functional areas of concern. The benefit of choosing Kid Sense which provides both Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy.

Contact us today to make an initial enquiry or book an assessment for your child
on 1800 KID SENSE (1800 543 736)

