

Your Child Goes to PREKINDERGARTEN

About Four-Year-Olds

4 The busiest and most active children in the classroom or at home are the four-year-olds. They want to be around lots of children their own age and seem to always be using their large muscles to run, jump, climb, and push.

Sometimes four-year-olds are difficult to understand. One minute, they are confident and daring, and the next they need re-assurance. Young children need to be praised for trying and encouraged to explore their world. However, they must follow rules made up for their safety. They need to develop independence and make some reasonable

choices for themselves, but they also must have firm limits.

It is in the nature of four-year-olds to test limits that are placed on their behavior and actions. They need to learn the difference between what is right and wrong. They need to be encouraged to follow school rules, but they also need someone to listen to their side of the story. Keep in mind that most four-year-olds mean to be cooperative. But they are very busy trying to figure out strategies for playing and working cooperatively with others. They are beginning to understand the reasons for rules and exploring what it means to be a friend. This is hard work, especially for these young children who are just getting started with life at school.

Some things your child should know and be able to do before coming to prekindergarten include but are not limited to:

- Beginning to choose and to follow routines, such as listening to a story before bedtime
- Beginning to recognize his or her first name in print
- Knowing how to ask an adult for help
- Recognizing a favorite book by its cover and asking that it be read aloud
- Being curious about letters, words, numbers, and counting
- Repeating parts of rhymes or some words from familiar songs
- Following basic two- or three-step directions, such as, "Get your coat, put it on, and stand by the door."
- Listening to a story when read aloud
- Handling books carefully
- Following some basic rules at home, such as putting toys away

What will your child be learning in prekindergarten?

The instructional program will be organized to support your child's growth in the seven developmental dimensions of early learning: personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, and physical development and health. Being interested in stories and books is one of the most important attitudes that children develop during the years before they begin reading. For this reason, you will observe that instruction in language and literacy is a major area of focus in your child's prekindergarten program.

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Create a reading and conversation routine.

Set a special time to read to and talk with your child every day.

Some things you can do to support your child's learning in prekindergarten include but are not limited to:

Personal and Social Development

- **Let her do it for herself.** Allow time for your child to dress herself in the morning and ask her to help pick out school clothes the night before.
- **Create rituals** – Establish routines for going to bed, getting ready to ride in the car, going to school or child care, saying goodbye, and so on. Rituals help young children feel safe and in control.

Language & Literacy

- **Let him tell the story.** Have your child explain what he sees in the illustrations of a book that you are reading together.
- **Create a reading and conversation routine.** Set a special time to read to and talk with your child every day, such as right after dinner, or when she is getting ready to go to sleep. Read anytime and talk about the characters, ideas, and events in the story!
- **Sign his name.** To help your child recognize his name, write it on a sign that you attach to his bedroom door.
- **Then have her sign her name.** Let your child write her own name on letters or cards you send to friends or relatives.
- **Take dictation.** Encourage your child to tell you his ideas, and then write them down for him. Or have him put the ideas on paper in the form of pictures, which you can then label for him to send to relatives. Ask your child to dictate a thank you letter or an invitation to a relative or friend.

Mathematical Thinking

- **Figure out the grocery store.** Point out how food in the store is organized: cereal in this aisle, canned fruits in this aisle, paper goods over here, and so on.
- **Point out and set patterns.** Draw his attention to the patterns around the edge of a rug or arrange buttons, crayons, or game pieces into different patterns and see if your child can continue the patterns.
- **Keep on counting.** Count together how many stop signs, traffic lights, or gas stations there are between where you live and the grocery store. Find counting books in the

library, and as you read them, count the objects in the pictures together.

Scientific Thinking

- **Search for nature books.** Go to the library and borrow books about butterflies and cocoons, dinosaurs, birds – animals that interest both you and your child. Talk about the way animals grow, where they live, how they change, and so on.
- **Help your child with her questions.** Listen carefully when your child asks “why” questions and plan ways to involve her in finding answers, such as asking an expert, looking in a book, or observing together to gather evidence.

Social Studies

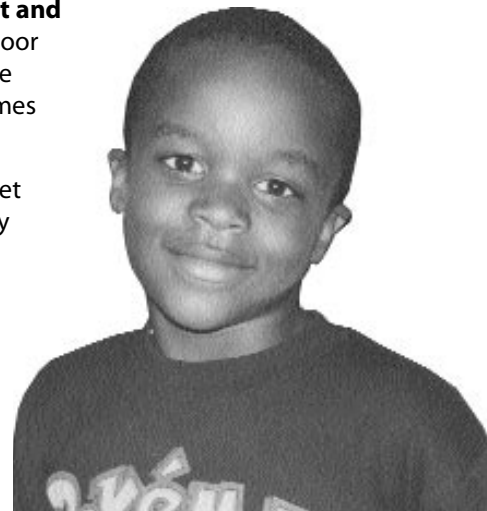
- **Talk about your family.** Discuss the similarities and differences in your ages, sizes, hair and eye color, and talents (for example: ability to sing, draw, garden, do plumbing, work on cars or motorcycles, and so on).
- **Talk about the work that people do.** As you and your child go through the day, talk about all the people you see doing jobs that help others.

The Arts

- **Share your childhood songs.** Teach your child some songs you sang at school or camp.
- **Show him you care.** Express interest in the work your child does and the art objects she makes.

Physical Development and Health

- **Encourage movement and activity.** Provide outdoor time in your yard or the park at least several times a week.
- **Teach him to cook.** Get those little fingers busy by letting your child help with food preparation by washing vegetables, mixing cake batter, drying utensils.



Maryland State Department of Education - Early Learning Office
For more information, call 410-767-0335.