



FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Preparing Your Child

About full-day kindergarten

Full-day kindergarten is designed to give your child a stronger start in school and in life – by providing four- and five-year-olds with an engaging, inquiry and play-based learning program during the regular school day. Children are involved in a variety of learning activities to help them investigate, problem solve and collaborate, under the guidance of an educator team that includes a teacher and early childhood educator. Full-day kindergarten will help your four- or five-year-old get ready for Grade 1.

Parent participation is key

Your involvement in your child's learning is important at every stage of their education. There are many things that you can do at home to give your children a positive start on learning and help them make the most of kindergarten.

Tips to help your child start kindergarten

Listen and talk to your child about what kindergarten will be like. Express excitement and enthusiasm so that your child will look forward to school.

Arrange for your child to spend some time with relatives or close family friends. This often helps children develop a growing sense of independence and capacities for communicating needs with other adults. It also gives you a chance to see how your child reacts when you are not there.

Set up playdates. It is important to maintain social skills over the summer months for all children, regardless of preschool experiences. Setting up playdates with children who will attend the same school can help your child establish early friendships.

Visit child and family programs. Ontario has several centres that provide opportunities for families to be a part of their children's learning.



ontario.ca/kindergartenready



Tips for the first day of class

Invite your child to take a special item from home (e.g., stuffed toy to provide comfort) if necessary.

Arrive early and walk around the school and playground to help orient your child. If your child will be taking the bus, perhaps visit the school a few days in advance.

Remain cheerful and let your child know who will be there to pick them up at the end of the school day.

Remind them about the exciting new things they will learn and take some time to greet or talk to the educators together.

Once school starts

Here are some simple ways you can help your child make the most of full-day kindergarten:

- Make learning a regular part of your activities at home (e.g., talking with your child about the world around them, playing games together, cooking together).
- Talk to your child's educators about other ways you can support your child at home every day.

- Ask your child specific questions about what they learned or did during the day. For example:
 - What areas did you learn in today (e.g., blocks, sand, water, library, dramatic play)? What did you do there?
 - You had a special visitor in your class today. Who was it? What did they talk about? What did they bring with them?
 - I saw the picture you made hanging on the bulletin board in your classroom. Tell me about how you made it. How did you decide what to draw?
- Show an interest in your child's learning – ask your child about their school day and make school and learning an important part of family conversation.
- Attend information meetings and other events organized for parents and families.
- Speak to your child's educators if you have any questions or concerns about your child's school experience. Your involvement in your child's learning is important at every stage of their education.

Contact your child's school

Many schools provide information and resources for families with children attending full-day kindergarten. These may be provided at information nights, sent home through the mail or posted on the school or board website.





Ways to support your child's learning at home

Make reading fun

Cuddle up and read. Quiet times together are opportunities to bond and read. Put some excitement into your voice. As you go, explain any new words or ideas. Talk about the pictures.

Be a reading role model. When your children see you reading, they will want to imitate you. It won't be long until they learn that reading is fun, interesting, and a "grown up" thing to do.

Public libraries are worlds to explore. Your library has great resources and terrific in-house programs such as reading circles for little ones and homework clubs for older children.

Games can be great learning tools. Board games or card games like word bingo or memory and rhyming cards can be a fun way to learn about words, letter sounds and reading.

Build strong, positive attitudes about math

When children feel positively engaged and successful, they are more likely to stick with an activity or a problem to find a solution.

Start at your child's level. Begin with activities that meet your child's level of understanding

in math. Early success in solving problems will build your child's confidence. Gradually move to activities that provide more of a challenge for your child.

Words and movement help with counting. When children are learning to count, they like to touch, point to and move objects as they say the number aloud – so encourage them!

Organize household items. Gather containers, boxes and packages from the cupboard. Ask your child to put them in some type of order (e.g., taller and shorter, holds more and holds less, empty and full, heavier and lighter, etc.).

Build an awareness of time. Use cues to let your child know the passage of time (e.g., "It took us only two minutes to tidy up your toys"). Tell your child the time in the context of daily activities (e.g., "It will be 7 p.m. in ten minutes and time for your bath").



Use games to help your child learn shapes. Play "I Spy" with your child by asking them to guess an object you identify by its shape: "I spy something that is round," "I spy something that has a cylinder shape." Make this game more challenging by stating two shapes: "I spy something that is round and has a square on it."

Use the language your child knows best. If you and your child are more comfortable in a language other than English, go ahead and use it. Your child will understand math concepts better in the language that they know best.

Develop skills through arts and crafts

Art fosters a child's imagination. It can encourage problem solving and critical thinking. Look for opportunities to help your children develop literacy, thinking and math skills while they enjoy creating their art work.

Offer a wide range of art experiences. When children can explore different kinds of materials, they gain a sense of pride that is reflected in their creativity. Art stimulates learning, and plays an important role in developing their communication and thinking skills.

Organize different art materials and then let your children explore them. Encourage your children to tell you what they like or don't like about certain materials. Art helps develop decision-making skills and fosters imagination.

Let your children make their own choices. Art is a way for children to express their feelings. Keep the activity unstructured. For example, if your children talk about painting a snowman, let them decide what it should look like. Encourage them to talk about their choices, without judging their decisions.

Encourage your children to explore interesting materials. These could include leaves, pine cones, egg boxes, cereal boxes, straws, wrapping paper, etc. Children can count them, divide them into equal piles or match them by colour. All of these activities build math and literacy skills.

Talk to your children about what they are doing, rather than asking them to interpret the art. Ask about the different colours, textures and shapes of the materials. For example, ask "What does this painting make you think of?" or "I wonder what will happen if we mix the red and blue paint together?"

Point out art in the everyday environment. For example, talk about the shapes and textures in the playground. Ask questions like, "How many triangles can you count in the playground?" Talk about the different colours of the leaves. Make a



game out of estimating quantity. For example, ask your child to guess whether there are more red or yellow leaves in a certain tree.

New activities are great vocabulary builders. Introduce new words like "drizzle the glue", "dab the paint" or "sprinkle the sparkles". Keep a dictionary close by to point out the words.

Encourage questions. Giving children the confidence to ask questions lets them expand their knowledge and understanding of art. Use their questions to introduce new words into their vocabulary.

Provide an area to display your child's work that so it can be enjoyed by family and friends. Children enjoy seeing themselves as artists. Be sure to date the artwork and have them sign it, so that you can talk about work done "a while ago" and they begin to learn about time.

More information

Visit ontario.ca/kindergarten for more information about what your child will learn and do.

Find a child and family program near you at ontario.ca/childcare.

Download these guides and fact sheets in many languages at ontario.ca/EDUparents:

- Full-Day Kindergarten: A Question and Answer Guide for Parents
- Doing Mathematics with Your Child K-6
- Reading and Writing with Your Child K-6
- Common questions to ask a child care provider