

Kindergartners

Every school district has different expectations on what a child entering Kindergarten should know. This list comes from the Bakersfield City School District.

For those children entering Kindergarten this year, you can give them a head start by working with them on these skills:

- Colors
- Shapes
- Counting (1-30)
- Recognizing their name – first and last
- Letters (upper case and lower case)
- Writing their first name
- Knowing their address and telephone number
- Being able to sit quietly at a task for 20 minutes (or so)

Try setting aside time each day to work on their Kindergarten skills. You'll have more success if you make it the same time every day. Don't worry about working on every single skill. Pick a couple of tasks to focus on each child.



Preparing for Kindergarten

Getting children ready for school is about a lot more than making sure he or she know their A, B, C's (even though that is important too). It is also important to make sure children are emotionally and socially ready.

Activity #1

♥Talking About School

Materials Needed:

Magazine pictures of things you would find in a school

Large piece of paper or cardboard

Paste or Glue (See index for homemade Paste recipe)

1. Ask your child if they know someone who goes to school. What do they think children do at school? (Perhaps you have a school age child who would be willing to tell your child what school is like.)
2. Give your child a chance to look through the pictures you have that shows something they might do at a school. Can they tell you what the object is or what the children are doing? You might want to point out that some children may be afraid to go to school for the first time. What kinds of things might be scary to them? (New place? New people? Not knowing what to expect?) See if they can remember coming to your house for the first time. Can they remember how they felt? Are there any other first time situations they'd like to talk about:
 - The first haircut.
 - A visit to the doctor.
 - A visit to the dentist.
 - Staying away from home overnight.

Activity #2 (Refer this activity to the parent.)

♥Visit school. Before your child's first day of school, make sure you've had a chance to meet the teacher and to prepare your child for the way he/she will get to school. Most school districts are very receptive to letting you visit a couple of times. It is best to visit while school is in session. This was helpful to my son because he had a chance to see the kids working in the classroom.

Activity #3

♥Play School. Children love to play school and take turns being the teacher and the students. Provide props such as schoolbooks, paper, pencils, crayons, books and lunch boxes. You can also give "school work" but be sure to make it fun.

Activity #4

♥Visiting the doctor. Most kindergartners need a physical and additional immunizations before starting school (even if they have been attending a preschool). Playing "Doctor's Office" can help to reduce fear before the actual visit. Doctors evaluate the children's physical health: height, weight, vision, hearing, speech, body parts and they evaluate the child's cognitive development. They may ask the child to hop up and down, identify body parts, say their first and last name, identify their age, etc. It is really important to reassure the kids about shots. Most kids need an additional MMR, Tetanus Booster and a TB Skin Test. The shots hurt because they are injected straight into the large muscles of the leg. The TB Skin Test shows up as a small bubble in the child's forearm. Believe it or not, this upset my son more than anything. Explain to the child that the bubble will go down in a couple of days but they shouldn't press on the bubble or scratch it.

Activity #5

♥New Experiences/Setting Good Habits

Eating breakfast is a really good tradition to start preparing your child for school. If you are like most people (me included) this is hard. It is difficult to make time in the morning to eat. Some healthy snacks include:

- Crackers with peanut butter or cheese slices
- Celery sticks with peanut butter or cheese spread
- Apple slices
- Apple slices with peanut butter
- Bananas
- Grapes
- Carrot sticks
- Orange slices
- Raisins
- Fruit Cocktail

Activity #6

♥Practice tasting different foods with your child. Kindergartners often have a hard time eating the hot lunches provided by school because of the diverse taste of all the students.

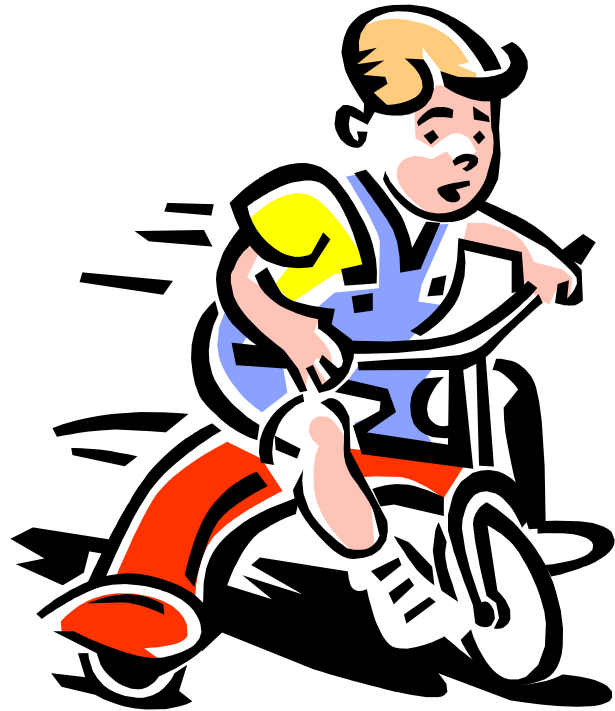
Activity #7

♥Taking turns can help children practice sharing and practice waiting.

Materials:

A tricycle or other riding toy.

Ask your child what taking turns means? Why do we sometimes have to take turns? How can we decide when someone else gets a turn. Can he/she think of something to do to make waiting for a turn easier?



Numbers

Learning about numbers is fun. The first math skills learned are typically sorting, patterning, ordering, counting, number recognition, and the concept of "more". Young children usually learn to count to 10 at an early age. They feel successful and proud when they have accomplished this task, although a true understanding of numbers comes later.

Activity #1

♥A simple song to teach a child their telephone number goes –

Sung in rhythm, " _ _ _ - _ _ _ _ . That's the phone number for me!!!!

Activity #2

♥The "Finger Counting" game is a very fun way to use your fingers, and help children reinforce counting skills and to begin SIMPLE addition. You start the game by holding up any number of fingers and having the child tell you how many fingers you are holding up. As soon as they answer, change the number of fingers and have them tell you again. Play as long as they like and feel free to repeat numbers. Children like this game because it moves very quickly and they master it very quickly. As they become more advanced (5 year olds) and can WRITE their numbers, have the children write the number of fingers you are holding up. You can begin simple addition by holding up fingers on one hand, then fingers on the other hand and asking the child to tell you how many all together.

Activity #3

♥Bean Count. Fill a small plastic container with an assortment of different colors and sizes of dry beans (lima, kidney, black, black-eyed, green peas). Have your child sort the beans into the sections of a muffin tin. How many of each kind of bean do you have? Keep the numbers under ten.

Activity #4

♥Simple Counting Songs

Let your child practice counting to ten by lining up ten stuffed animals and dolls and singing this familiar tune (Ten Little Indians)

"One little, two little, three good friends,
Four little, five little, six good friends,
Seven little, eight little, nine good friends,
Ten good friends are we.

Five Little Monkeys

Five Little Monkeys sitting in a tree,

Teasing Mr. Alligator, "Can't catch me."
Along comes Mr. Alligator, quiet as can be.
Snatch that monkey right out of that tree.

(Repeat verse with four, three, two, one)

Five Green and Speckled Frogs

Five green and speckled frogs
Sat on a lumpy log
Eating the most delicious bugs----Yum Yum
One jumped into the pool
Where it was nice and cool
Now there are four green frogs

(Repeat verse with four, three, two, one)

This Old Man

This Old Man, he played one
He played knick knack on my thumb
With a knick knack paddy whack
Give a dog a bone
This Old Man came rolling home

This Old Man, he played two
He played knick knack on my shoe
With a knick knack paddy whack
Give a dog a bone
This Old Man came rolling home

This Old Man, he played three
He played knick knack on my knee
With a knick knack paddy whack
Give a dog a bone
This Old Man came rolling home

This Old Man, he played four
He played knick knack at my door
With a knick knack paddy whack
Give a dog a bone
This Old Man came rolling home

This Old Man, he played five
He played knick knack as he jived
With a knick knack paddy whack
Give a dog a bone
This Old Man came rolling home

1,2,3,4,5

1,2,3,4,5

Once I caught a fish alive,

6,7,8,9,10,

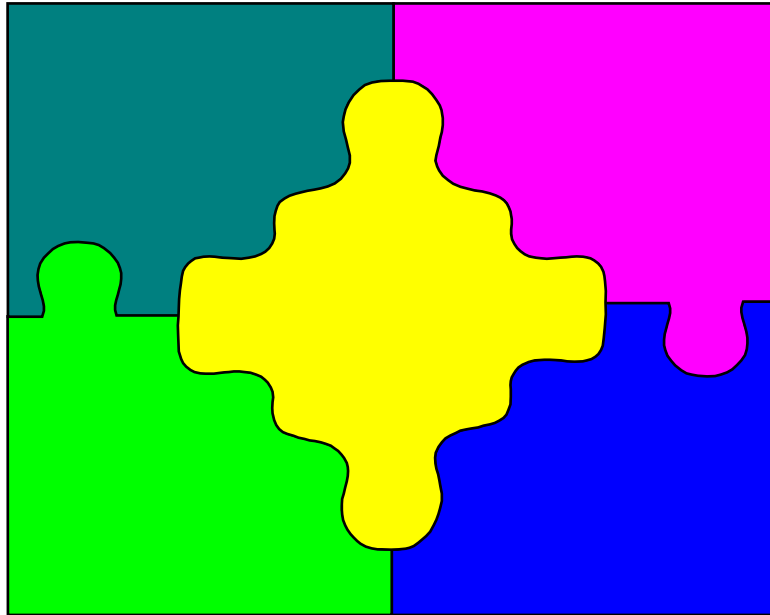
Then I threw him back again.

Why did you let him go?

Because he bit my finger so.

Which finger did he bite?

This little finger on the right.



ABC's

Many three, four and five year old children are beginning to have an interest in written words and the ABC's. Young children feel successful when they can begin to recognize letters, especially the letters in their own names and in familiar, meaningful words in their surroundings.

Activity #1

♥When working on letters, try learning upper case first, then lower case. Although memorization through flash cards does work, don't limit yourself. Make Playdough (See index for recipe) and let the kids shape Playdough into letters. Use letter shaped cookie cutters and make cookies.

Activity #2

♥Letter bag. Collect small objects that begin with the first letter of your child's name. Put the objects in a bag and have your child reach in and describe each one. Challenge your child to find more objects that begin with the same letter.

Activity #3

♥Typing. Allow your child to practice typing his/her name on a computer keyboard or typewriter. Make a list of meaningful words for your older preschooler to copy. For example, make a list of words associated with an upcoming holiday or, if your child is interested in a particular topic or sport, list words associated with that interest.

Activity #4

♥Teach the sound of a particular letter by singing a favorite song. For example, to introduce the sound of the letter B, sing "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean." Alternately, stand up/sit down whenever you sing a word beginning with the letter B.

Activity #5

♥Item Labels. Print the names of items in your home on pieces of paper and tape them to the items. Your 4 or 5 year old can begin to recognize familiar words.

Activity #6

♥Writing Names. You can help your child learn the letters in his/her name by providing a shallow pan or cookie sheet covered with wet sand, cornmeal or shaving cream for writing. Have your child use his/her index finger to form the letters of his/her name.

Colors and Shapes

There are shapes and colors all around us – in the sky, in the sea, on the ground, and in our homes. Most preschoolers learn about colors and shapes naturally, as they go about their daily business. Children entering Kindergarten should be able to identify primary and secondary colors and basic geometric shapes.

Activity #1

♥Color Rhymes. Practice color recognition by looking at each other's clothes, eyes and hair color. Play this game:

"If you're wearing blue, touch your shoe."

"If you're wearing red, touch your head."

"If you're eyes are brown, turn around."

"If you're wearing pink, give a wink."

Activity #2

♥Color Telescopes. Recycle cardboard tubes (such as toilet paper or paper towel tubes). Cut out a square of colored cellophane that generously fits over one end of the tube. Secure the cellophane to the tube with a rubber band. Look thorough the open end of the tube to discover colors and shapes around you. Try this: overlap two primary colors of cellophane to make a secondary color.

Activity #3

♥Make New Colors. Use primary color paints (see index for paint recipe). Mix colors (red and blue = purple), (blue and yellow = green), (yellow and red = orange). This is fun to do with finger paint.

Activity #4

♥Color Cutouts. Recycle old magazines by letting children cut out as many pictures as possible of any one color. Paste the pictures onto construction paper of the chosen color.

Activity #5

♥Food Shapes. Cut your child's sandwiches into a different shape each day. Cut a square one day and triangles the next. Use a round cookie cutter for a circle sandwich!

Activity #6

♥Wood Construction. Collect small scraps of wood in various shapes. Let your child glue the scraps together to create an interesting shaped structure. Allow it to dry overnight. Your child can paint and decorate (using empty thread spools, cloth, yarn) the structure. Display the creation in a special place so that your child knows that you are proud of his/her efforts. For a more involved project, your child might enjoy using sandpaper to sand the wood before assembling and gluing.

Nature

Young children are fascinated with nature – from rocks and leaves, to ant hills and spider webs. Through the enjoyment of nature, young children develop a respect for and an understanding of the world around them.

Activity #1

♥Nature walk bracelet. Tape a piece of masking tape around the child's wrist – sticky side out. Let the child collect leaves, flowers, rocks and stick them to the bracelet for safekeeping.

Activity #2

♥Crafty Animals. Let your child collect sticks, small stones, and shells and then glue them together to form big and little rabbits, mice, chipmunks, turtles and other creatures. Add details with markers.

Activity #3

♥Pine Cone Bird Feeder. Help your child spread peanut butter on a pine cone (or empty toilet paper roll) using a popsicle stick. Roll the pinecone in a bowl of birdseed. Tie a long length of yarn or string to the top of the pine cone. Hang it outside. Have fun watching the birds enjoy their treat.

Activity #4

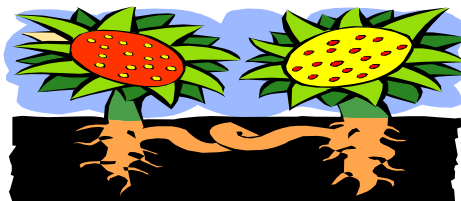
♥Egg carton Critters. Cut the bottom of a cardboard egg carton in half lengthwise. Paint (see Index for homemade paint recipe) and decorate to look like caterpillars, ladybugs, spiders and any other creepy crawlies.

Activity #5

♥Sprouting Carrot. Cut off the top (large) end of a carrot and place it in a shallow dish of water near sunlight. Watch the carrot top sprout in a few days. Older children can count the number of days it takes for the carrot to sprout.

Activity #6

♥Pretend Campout. Make a tent by draping a blanket or sheet over two chairs. Gather camping equipment like a sleeping bag (or pillow and blanket), flashlight, canteen (or water bottle). Wooden blocks (or clean fireplace logs) can be used as a pretend campfire (a lit flashlight in the middle of the blocks looks like flames.)



Marvelous Messes

"Sometimes kids just like to make a mess." William, age 6

Here are some recipes guaranteed to encourage children to Experiment, Explore, Examine and Experience. Help children vocalize what they think of the different mixtures – cold, soft, squishy, liquid, powder, etc. This improves a child's vocabulary and strengthens reading and comprehension skills.

Activity #1

♥Home made sand. 4 cups dried, used, coffee grounds, 2 cups cornmeal, 1 cup flour, ½ cup salt. Use plastic containers, measuring cups and kitchen tools in place of expensive sand toys.

Activity #2

♥Feelie Bags. Karo syrup or hair gel, zip lock sandwich bags, small plastic toys, glitter, sequins, etc. WHAT TO DO: Pour syrup or gel into bag, add sequins, glitter, plastic toys, etc. Close and seal bag with clear shipping tape.

Variations:

Use jello instead of syrup or hair gel. Prepare jello as instructed on package. Store in refrigerator. When set, spoon into bags (as above) and allow the kids to squish to their heart's content. Re-set jello by storing bag back in the refrigerator.

Use cornstarch, sugar and water. You'll need 4 cups of cornstarch, 1 cup sugar, and 12 cups water. Mix together the water and sugar in a saucepan, add the cornstarch while stirring over med/high heat. It takes about 20 minutes. Mixture will look creamy and white. Divide into separate ziploc bags and add foodcoloring while still warm. Let cool after you color it. Keep stored in ziploc bags.

Caution: adults should do the cooking.

Activity #3

♥Shaving cream and water. Add some water to a clear large container. Put a layer of shaving cream on top. Allow the children to eyedrop colors onto the shaving cream.

Activity #4

♥Cornstarch and water. Equal parts – mixed into a bowl. This great mixture is solid and liquid at the same time.

Activity#5

♥Cinnamon-Apple Sauce Dough. Mix equal parts of cinnamon and apple sauce to form a dough. Allow children to play with it just like playdough. Can be cut into shapes and baked in the oven. It retains its cinnamon smell for a couple of weeks.

Activity #6

♥Birdseed. Pour birdseed into a large open container (a sweater storage box works great). Give the kids things from the kitchen to scoop, pour, mix and sift the birdseed.

Variation: Fill a sweater box with cotton balls. Give the children tongs, chopsticks or small plastic spoons and let them practice with these unfamiliar tools.



Reading

Reading is a wonderful way to prepare your child for school. Here are some of my favorite titles.

The Napping House
I'm Quick as a Cricket
King Bidgood's in the Bathtub
The Very Hungry Caterpillar
The Very Busy Spider
The Very Grouchy Ladybug
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day
No, David
Whistle for Willie
Abuela
Chicken Sunday
In Daddy's Arms, I am Tall
Tell me again about the Night I was Born
Amazing Grace
The Relatives Came
The Song and Dance Man
Chicka Chicka Boom Boom
Bugs in a Box
The Wide Mouthed Frog
The True Story of the Three Little Pigs
Uncle Frank's Pit
Stone Soup



Lisa's Learning Tools for Kindergarten Readiness



Activities for Children Ages 4-5



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