

Ways to Help Your 3-Year-Old Prepare for Preschool

Starting preschool is a big transition! Here are some practical tips to help your child feel confident and ready for their first day.

1. Build Independence in Daily Routines

- Practice putting on shoes, using the toilet, and washing hands independently.
- Encourage self-feeding with a spoon or fork.
- Teach them how to clean up after playtime (putting toys in a bin).

2. Create a Goodbye Routine

- Have a simple, consistent goodbye phrase (e.g., "I love you! Have fun! See you soon!").
- Keep goodbyes short and positive—lingering can increase anxiety.
- Let them bring a small comfort item (a stuffed toy or family picture).

3. Encourage Social Skills

- Arrange playdates to practice sharing, taking turns, and playing cooperatively.
- Teach simple phrases like "Can I play?" and "It's my turn."
- Role-play common preschool scenarios, like asking for help or joining a group activity.

4. Develop Listening & Following Directions

- Give simple one- and two-step directions (e.g., "Pick up your toy and put it in the box").
- Play games like Simon Says to build listening skills.
- Read books and ask questions about the story to improve attention span.

5. Practice Being Away from You

- Do short separations with trusted caregivers (family, babysitters) to ease anxiety.
- Gradually increase the time apart so they get used to being without you.

6. Visit the Preschool in Advance

- If possible, take a tour, meet the teacher, and explore the classroom before the first day.
- Show pictures of the school and talk about what they'll do there (playing, learning, making friends).

7. Read Books About Preschool

- Books can help ease fears and set expectations:
- The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn
- Llama Llama Misses Mama by Anna Dewdney
- The Night Before Preschool by Natasha Wing

8. Keep a Positive Attitude 😊

- Talk about preschool as an exciting adventure rather than something scary.
- Avoid saying things like "I'll miss you so much!" (this might make them feel guilty or worried).
- Instead, say "You're going to have so much fun! I can't wait to hear about your day!"