

## Reading

**By the end of the year, you can expect your child to:**

1. Follow class rules
2. Separate from a parent or caregiver with ease
3. Take turns
4. Cut along a line with scissors
5. Establish left- or right-hand dominance
6. Understand time concepts like yesterday, today, and tomorrow
7. Stand quietly in a line
8. Follow directions agreeably and easily
9. Pay attention for 15 to 20 minutes
10. Hold a crayon and pencil correctly
11. Share materials such as crayons and blocks
12. Know the eight basic colors: red, yellow, blue, green, orange, black, white, and pink
13. Recognize and write the letters of the alphabet in upper- and lowercase forms
14. Know the relationship between letters and the sounds they make
15. Recognize sight words such as *the* and read simple sentences
16. Spell his first and last name
17. Write consonant-vowel-consonant words such as *bat* and *fan*
18. Retell a story that has been read aloud
19. Identify numbers up to 20
20. Count by ones, fives, and tens to 100
21. Know basic shapes such as square, triangle, rectangle, and circle
22. Know her address and phone number

## Reading readiness skills

Throughout the year your kindergartner is being introduced to skills that will prepare him to read.

He is working with the letters of the alphabet, building his vocabulary and beginning to understand that reading is a way to derive meaning from print. He is immersed in a print-rich environment that will help him develop an awareness and understanding of spoken and written language.

Reading specialist Jennifer Thompson explains: "As children use language, they reveal their working knowledge of the rules of language, how to use them, and put words and parts of words together in meaningful ways."

## Books and print

Your child is learning how books are read from front cover to back cover, from the top of the page to the bottom of the page, and from left to right. By the end of the year, she will recognize the parts of a book such as the cover, title page and table of contents.

## **The letter-sound relationship**

Your kindergartner is learning the relationship of sounds to letters so that he can decode written words. He should be getting repeated practice working with letters and their sounds, perhaps by sorting picture cards according to their beginning sounds. He practices blending sounds together to make words and breaking words down into separate sounds. He learns the building blocks of words by clapping out the syllables along with the teacher. Kindergartners begin to read easy books to practice the letter-sound relationship they are learning. They learn to recognize frequently used words, such as *asis* and *here*.

## **Reading for meaning**

Your kindergartner is learning to derive meaning from what is read aloud and what she reads. You can expect her to recognize the sequence of events in a story, and their cause and effect, as well as to anticipate the possible outcome. She learns to retell familiar stories, summarizing the main ideas and plot. She can identify the characters, settings and important events. The class may act out a story with props to show that the children understand the characters and plot.

## **Reading aloud**

Kindergartners frequently listen to books being read aloud. Listening to a teacher or parent provides a model of fluent reading and helps children develop a positive attitude toward books. It also helps your child understand vocabulary and language patterns in texts.

Books read aloud are often discussed before, during and after the reading to increase involvement and understanding of the text. "This conversation is critical," says Thompson, "for it helps children build their background knowledge when adults model their thinking, experiences and images that come to mind as they read. Children can use this to connect what the author is saying, to what they already know."

## **Shared reading experience**

Your kindergartner may take part in shared reading, an interactive reading experience. During shared reading your child joins in the reading of a big book, one with enlarged text that the whole class can see, guided by his teacher. During the reading, children are actively involved. The teacher may pause to teach vocabulary, introduce a reading skill and encourage the students to predict what comes next. Your kindergartner should be able to follow along with the text and pictures while the book is being read. The book is typically read multiple times over several days. "Active involvement between student and teacher motivates interest, enhances comprehension of story and sense of story structure," says Thompson.

## **Writing**

Many children have their first writing experiences in kindergarten. That's why teachers usually begin the year by introducing the letters of the alphabet - the most basic building blocks of writing. Children learn how to form letters, what sounds they make and how to combine letters to make words. Students often study the sound and form of a letter at

the same time. Throughout the year, kindergartners also participate in activities that help them begin to understand the purpose of writing, such as:

1. Listening to books read aloud
2. Participating in shared writing, in which the teacher writes a story and students contribute to it orally
3. Doing interactive writing, in which students and the teacher compose text together
4. Writing in journals

By the end of kindergarten, your child may be creating stories with pictures and words, revising his writing with assistance and then publishing or sharing it with assistance.

### **What will my kindergartner learn about spelling?**

Your kindergartner begins to learn about spelling by connecting the sounds she hears in words to the letters they represent. She is introduced to the letters of the alphabet early in the year. Then the teacher focuses on one letter at a time and its sound. Your kindergartner learns the sounds associated with the letters of her name. She does activities to increase awareness of letter sounds, such as making a collage of cut-out magazine pictures that begin with a particular letter.

### **Invented spelling**

In kindergarten, children are encouraged to spell words the way they sound, which is called [invented or inventive spelling](#). For example, your child may spell the word *cat* by writing "ct." Children usually start writing with consonants and beginning sounds because they are more distinct than vowels and ending sounds.

When children use invented spelling, they are demonstrating their knowledge of the sounds letters make. Research shows that letting children use invented spelling allows them to focus on the purpose of writing: communication. As they learn the rules of spelling, they begin to apply them and make the transition to conventional spelling.

By the end of kindergarten, your child will have learned to spell:

1. Consonant-vowel-consonant words such as *bat* and *fan*
2. His own name

### **What will my kindergartner learn about handwriting?**

Since kindergartners' fine motor skills are still developing, they are introduced to handwriting through a variety of tactile (how it feels) approaches. Typical activities include writing letters with finger paint, in a box of salt or in sand. They may also write letters in midair with their fingers or trace letters at the blackboard or on paper.

In kindergarten, students learn how to hold a pencil correctly. They usually begin learning how to form letters by writing the letters in their names. They practice writing upper- and lowercase letters and learn how to correctly shape and space them. They may learn how to write a letter as they memorize the sound it makes. Kindergartners are taught that we write from left to right and from top to bottom.

## Putting it all together

In addition to the mechanics of letters and sounds, kindergartners learn why people write. Teachers read different types of writing aloud and discuss with the class why the author wrote it. Teachers also show students how they use writing for a variety of purposes: labeling a graph in math, composing a thank-you note to a class visitor or recording the results of a science project. The teacher gives students simple simple exercises to write for real-life purposes.

Many classes begin the day with a shared writing activity in which students brainstorm a sentence or two. The teacher usually writes the sentences on a white board or on chart paper while the class follows along and makes suggestions. As he writes, the teacher might model how to sound out a word or when to use a capital letter. As an extension of this activity, other skills can be addressed such as punctuation, prefixes and suffixes.

Many kindergartners also write in journals each day. At the beginning of the year, some students can only draw pictures or write random letters. But by the end of kindergarten, most students use invented spelling to write short sentences that tell a story or describe their experiences.

## What to Look for When You Visit

1. Alphabet charts prominently displayed in the classroom
2. Name labels on students' desks and cubbies
3. Word labels on objects in the classroom, such as the door, a chair and a desk
4. Alphabet cards with matching pictures for each letter
5. Examples of shared writing on charts around the room
6. Charts to which children can add words they know based on the letters or subjects they are currently learning
7. An array of writing tools such as crayons, markers, stamps, stickers, notepads and cards

## Math

### What math concepts will my kindergartner learn?

Your kindergartner begins to learn mathematical concepts by working with blocks, tiles, or other objects that can be counted, classified, and sorted. By using these objects, your child learns that adding means counting forward and subtracting means counting backward.

Kindergartners also learn how to group objects in a variety of ways such as by color, shape, and size. These tasks help your child begin to understand multiplication and fractions.

Your child practices counting numbers from one to 10. By the end of the year, she will be able to count to numbers greater than 10 and count by fives (5, 10, 15, 20, etc.) and 10s (10, 20, 30, etc.).

Many kindergarten teachers start the day with calendar time, in which your child learns math skills such as counting forward and backward and the concepts of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

### **From fractions to geometry**

Your kindergartner is introduced to fractions (perhaps by counting the number of slices that make up a pizza) and geometry (by learning to identify geometric shapes).

"Math at this time in a child's life is full of explorations both in and outside the classroom," explains Nicola Salvatico, our consulting teacher and the 2005 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year. "Taking advantage of real-life connections helps a child move from the concrete to the abstract facets of learning math."

### **Getting acquainted with money, time, and measurement**

Your child's teacher is likely to introduce the class to thinking about money, time, and measurement. Don't expect a kindergartner to use tools like rulers to measure. Your child will likely learn about distance with nonstandard forms of measurement such as using her hands or her steps. She might be asked to compare the number of steps it takes to walk to the reading corner with the number required to walk to the drinking fountain.

Kindergartners learn money skills such as identifying and counting coins. Your child will learn about pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. He will also count pennies by ones and nickels by fives. There may be a store set up with a play cash register and coins so that your child can explore counting and exchanging money.

Your child will begin to learn about time. He is introduced to analog and digital clocks and should be able to identify the big hand and little hand on an analog clock. Telling time to the hour is introduced, and he learns that when the big hand is on the 12 it means "o'clock."

### **What types of math instruction will my kindergartner get?**

Kindergarten teachers typically engage students in lessons with both objects and paper-and-pencil work. Your child is introduced to concepts by watching the teacher, then following up with hands-on activities and games that allow her to work individually and cooperatively in a group. Introduction and repetition of concepts helps a child master the math tasks that are required of them throughout the year.

### **Concepts are more important than math facts at this stage**

While some kindergartners can memorize specific addition and subtraction facts, such as  $2 + 2 = 4$ , it's important for them to grasp the concepts first.

### **What to look for when you visit**

- Blocks, bottle caps, dice, and other objects of different shapes and sizes for sorting and counting
- Students, alone or in small groups, working with these objects
- Graphs depicting the students' birthdays or their favorite foods
- Pictures of geometric shapes such as circles, squares, and triangles

