



Getting Ready To Learn

A Guide to Preparing Your

Child for Primary



Stepping into Primary

Starting school is a big step for your child and your whole family. It's a wonderful and exciting experience, but it also means a big change for you and your child.

We want to help you get off to a good start by giving you and your child information that will help you prepare. This booklet gives you:

- An overview of the primary program.
- Suggestions for ways to help your child get ready for school expectations and routines.
- Information about how children learn and develop through play
- Activities to help make the most of those important learning opportunities at home.

Learning and Growing in Primary

In Primary:

- Teachers combine subject areas to create learning opportunities that resemble real life – for example, playing store as a way of learning letters, numbers and social skills.
- There are times when children are expected to sit quietly and listen – but most of the time primary classes are filled with sound and activity.

Every day, the teacher will spend time:

- With the class as a whole group
- With students in small groups and one-to-one
- Reading stories
- Singing songs
- Learning rhymes, chants or poetry

The children will:

- Work on their own and in groups
- Learn through play.
- Participate in indoor and outdoor physical activity.

Primary is a place where your child will grow and learn. You can expect your child's primary class:

- To be a stimulating learning environment.
- To reflect the program and to be alive with activity centers, artwork, toys, learning spaces, creative materials, books, letters and words, dress-up clothes, art supplies, calendars, child-size furniture, blocks, puzzles, games, paper, pencils, erasers and much more.
- To have computers, plants, listening centers, sand and water tables.
- To have a variety of learning activities.

In the average primary class:

- Each child is slightly different in how he develops as he did when he learned to sit up, crawl, walk and talk.
- Children come from various racial and cultural backgrounds.
- Children have different learning styles.

These differences are respected and celebrated. The primary teacher designs a program with each child's unique learning needs in mind.



First Steps – Preparing for Primary

How ready is my child for school? That's a question many parents ask. Generally, any child who is excited and enthusiastic about learning is well-equipped to do well in Primary.

Think about how much your child has learned already. Before ever starting school, your child has learned some of the most important lessons of life.

- They know the difference between themselves and others, between family and strangers.
- They grasp the connection between cause and effect.
- They have a developing sense of time –past, present and future.
- They understand and can express spatial relationships – up from down, in from out, front from back.
- They can use the grammar of their language and have a large vocabulary of words.

These are tremendous achievements, and you were the teacher who helped your child accomplish them.

Your child will build on these skills during the early years of school. However, there are additional skills and knowledge you can help your child acquire during the next upcoming months that will ease the transition from home to school. They are listed at the back of the booklet in the form of a game you and your child can play. As your child takes each step in the game, provide a small reward – a stamp or sticker to indicate that step has been mastered and perhaps a small prize at the end.

Dress for Primary Success

When you're shopping for school clothes for your child, here are some tips in choosing the best wardrobe for "power learning".

- In the course of an average primary class, your child will sit on the floor, jump, run, walk, bounce, stretch, crouch, bend and sit in a chair. Choose clothes and footwear that will be comfortable during all of these activities.
- Choose clothes, jackets, shoes and boots that are easy for your child to **independently** put on, take off and fasten. Spend time practicing with him/her.
- Primary children learn best when they are exploring, discovering, experimenting - in other words, getting messy. Choose clothes that are durable and easy to clean.
- Outdoor play is an important part of the primary program. Your child needs outdoor clothing for all types of weather.



Sleep

Sleep, like healthy eating and exercise, is important to a child's health and well-being.

- Both the amount and quality of sleep your child gets will influence their learning.
- Sleep is important for healthy growth.
- A well-rested child does better at school, both in the classroom, with friends, and in dealing with daily routines.
- they have more energy for play, a better appetite and feel better about themselves.

Breakfast, Snacks and Lunch

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Prepare your child for the day by providing a well-balanced meal before he/she leaves for school. Snacks and lunch are an important part of the Primary health and nutrition program.

- At school, children begin to learn about the value of certain foods for their growth, strength and general well being.
- The Canadian Food Guide discourages foods with high sugar, salt or fat content.
- It is suggested that children bring a light, nutritious snack. Fruits and vegetables or crackers and cheese would be considered to be a great snack.
- Litterless lunches and snacks help children understand about caring for our environment.

Making the First Day Great

Do you remember your first day of school? Were you excited? Frightened? Sad? Your childhood memories about starting school and the feelings those memories bring back will influence how you feel about your child starting school.

You may also have mixed feelings about your child starting school:

- You may be feeling excitement for your child on one hand and a sense of loss on the other
- You may be worried about how your child will cope with new routines.
- Your attitude toward the start of school can help set a positive tone. If you feel anxious or worried, try not to pass those feelings along to your child.

Your child may also have some mixed feelings.

- They may feel worried that their teacher won't know their name.
- They may feel that they won't know the children in the class.
- But, most likely they also view the start of school and their new independence as an adventure and a challenge, especially if they feel prepared and know what to expect.

Here are some ways you can help your child have a good experience during the first few days of school.

Before the first day and in the weeks leading up to school.

- Practice walking to school or to the bus stop often, so it begins to feel like a familiar routine.
- Teach your child their bus route number and write it on their school bag.

A few days before school starts:

- Begin getting your child and yourself used to the bedtime and wake-up schedule that will be required during school.

The day before:

- Let your child pick out what they are going to wear on the first day of school.
- Let your child choose a favorite outfit from clothes that are already “broken-in” and comfortable.
- Try to get your child – and yourself- off to bed a bit early, so you are both well rested in the morning.

The first day:

- Get yourself and your child up early enough to eat a calm, unhurried breakfast.
- Keep things as normal as possible – if your child normally has cereal for breakfast, make him cereal this morning.
- ***When you say good-bye to your child on the first day, make it quick, light and reassuring.*** They will be reassured by a warm hug and a reminder that you – or their usual caregiver – will be picking them up or waiting at home after school is finished. ***Try not to communicate your feelings of anxiety and separation.***
- Students will have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the bus.

Many parents feel a temporary sense of loss when their children go off to school. If you are feeling that way, plan a special activity for yourself that you can look forward to during the first days of school.



What My Child Should Know Before Starting School.

It is helpful if your child:

- Knows his/her complete name and possible address and telephone number. Should know how to print his/her name using one capital letter followed by lowercase. i.e. Mary
- Knows how to share playthings and wait his/her turn.
- Knows how to play co-operatively in small groups with others.
- Knows how to fasten boots and outer clothing (buttons, zippers and snaps). Allow the children to take off and hang up own clothing at home and school.
- **Attempts to tie his shoelaces. If unable to tie, please buy Velcro sneakers.** All students should have a pair of indoor sneakers.
- Is able to use the bathroom independently and in a sanitary manner (Flushing toilet, washing hands, etc.).
- Is aware of basic safety rules.
- Learns lunch time etiquette. (eat sandwich first, knows how to close containers, etc). Do not send glass containers to school.
- Should be able to hold pencils, crayons and scissors.
- Teach them the names of their colors and shapes.
- It would be helpful if students recognize their letters and numbers 1-10.



The date for entry into grade primary has changed in recent years and children turning 5 anytime before December 31st are eligible to begin the previous September. This is confusing for some families who have children with late birthdays. A parent is the best judge of their child's maturity and school-readiness. Registering your child for school is a big decision. Feel free to consult with school staff before making this very important decision.

Supporting Your Child's Learning

Talking about the events of the day

Use the first day of school to start some routines that will help make sure the whole school year is great. One of these is to talk with your child every day about what happened at school.

Because young children are often not talkative about school when they are at home, here are some questions that can help to start the discussion.

- Tell me about the story your teacher read today.
- Name two good things that happened today.
- Tell me about your special friend or someone you met today.
- Where did you go at activity time? What did you like best?
- What are you looking forward to doing next time?

Play is your child's homework

- Watch your child at play – your observations will give you insight into how she prefers to learn.
- All play – in fact, anything your child is doing – can be a learning experience.

Here are some ideas to help you make the most of those opportunities during the next months as you prepare for the start of school.

Fun and Learning in a Cozy Corner

- Read to your child every day and ask questions to develop understanding.
- Reread favorite books encouraging your child to chime in.
- Provide opportunities for children to enjoy a variety of types of books (stories, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, alphabet books, information books, taped story books).
- Talk to your child in complete sentences and often.
- Listen carefully to what your child says.
- Ensure that your child has a wide range of experiences to talk about with you and others.



Fun and Learning in the Kitchen

- Pour the milk so each glass has the same amount.
- Tidy a cupboard by arranging boxes from tallest to shortest.
- Set the table for the family, counting the spoons, forks, knives, etc.
- Share an apple by cutting it in halves or quarters.
- Choose the best sized bowl for leftovers.
- Cook together measuring ingredients.
- Have writing and drawing materials available (paper, markers, pencils, crayons, chalkboards, magnetic letters).
- Let your child see you writing your grocery list, reading a recipe.
- Make letters in playdough or salt.

Fun and Learning in the Bathtub

- Find out things that will float or sink and talk about why.
- Learn about suction from eye droppers and plastic syringes.
- Provide an egg whisk to propel a toy boat along the water.
- Provide plastic containers and measuring cups to allow for measuring.
- Have fun in the bath with foam alphabet letters.

Fun and Learning in the Outdoors

- Give your child a magnifying glass to inspect things up close – bugs, leaves, grass, dirt.
- Use water and paint brushes or sidewalk chalk to make letters and numbers on sidewalks, fences, etc.
- Use a plastic jar to collect and measure the rainfall.
- Encourage your child to collect rocks, leaves, shells or flowers.
- Look for shapes in the outdoors – squares, triangles, circles, etc.

Fun and Learning in the Hallway

- Counting as you walk up and down stairs.
- Say nursery rhymes as you walk along (i.e. 1,2 Buckle My Shoe).
- Say a rhyming word with each step.

Fun and Learning in the Car

- Sing songs and say familiar rhymes to develop awareness of rhyme, words and sounds. Examples include: Pat a cake, Pat a cake, Mary Had a Little Lamb, Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star and the ABC song.
- Draw attention to the sounds in words (house, mouse, -those rhyme; bit bumblebee – those words start with “buh”).
- Play I Spy games using rhyming words, or first letter sounds.
- Make silly rhyming words that rhyme with your name.
- Listen to CD’s , taped stories, songs, nursery rhymes.
- Spell the letters of familiar signs(i.e. S-T-O-P spells stop)

Fun and Learning in the Playroom / Family Room

- Encourage your child to act out familiar stories using toys and props.
- Play games like “Go Fish” and “Concentration” with alphabet letters.
- Clap the syllables in your child’s name, names of family members, food, etc.
- Play with lego, puzzles, building toys, board games.



Recognize that each child is unique and develops at his/her own rate. Here are some things to try! You can put a stamp or sticker on each paw print when you have finished that step. When you've completed all the steps, you'll be ready to start school!



Tell your first name and last name.



Tell the first and last name of each of your parents.



Know where you live.



Print your name. It's okay for your mom or dad to print your name at the top of a piece of paper and for you to copy it underneath. For practice, use only a capital at the beginning and the rest lower case.



Say the colors in a small crayon box.



Tidy up your toys when you are finished playing.



Clear your own dishes from the table.



Go to the bathroom, flush the toilet and wash your hands yourself.



Put on your shoes and **tie your shoelaces**. *Tip for parents: help your child learn to tie shoes by allowing him/her to sit on your legs and tying your laces.*



up. Take off your sweater or jacket by yourself. Then put it back on. Zip or button it back



Listen quietly when someone reads you a story or



Sing and say the Alphabet Song. ABCDEFG (clap) HIJKLMN (clap) OPQ (clap) RST (clap) UVW (clap). Now I never will forget. How to sing my alphabet.
