

TEN TIPS FOR PRESCHOOL



- 1 Dropping off at preschool:** Before you drop your child off at preschool, explain in advance what is going to happen. Have your preschooler relate the upcoming sequence of events back to you. Once it is time to leave, keep it short and simple, as in, "Goodbye. I love you." Turn around and walk away. It is up to the preschool teacher to redirect your child; you have to let the teacher develop their own relationship with the child; make space for the trust and connection to develop between them.
- 2 Developmental milestones:** Between three and five years, your child is developing competency and mastery. Once they can ride a tricycle, they will want to do so over and over again to gain mastery. Once they can complete the puzzle, they will want to do it again and again. They want to climb higher and run faster. School is a great place to work out social interactions and social play.
- 3 Play dates and sharing:** Reframe the frustration you may be experiencing; conflict is a positive sign because the children are learning about relationships, negotiating time, space, and materials, and learning conflict resolution. Don't look at the children as aggressor and victim; each child has a viewpoint. Help the children have a dialog with each other. Give the children an opportunity to come up with a solution.
- 4 How to get your kid to listen:** Instead of commanding and demanding, "Get in your car seat right now," try to be playful, as in, "Oh, good, I'll sit in your car seat instead," or, "I have an imaginary friend that wants to sit next to you." Try novelty, as in, "After everyone is in the car, I'll tell you a new joke." You can also have the child do the desired request for themselves and point out their accomplishment, as in, "You tied your shoes like a big boy."
- 5 Reflective dialogues after a tantrum:** Reflective dialogue is when you use words to describe an experience. When you talk about what happened you're giving your child the opportunity to understand the experience even if it was distressful. For example: "You got really agitated. Everyone gets upset. In the future, I can help you put words to your feelings instead of breaking your toy."
- 6 What to do about tantrums:** A tantrum is a result of frustration; a little child trying to make big things happen or not getting her way. Once a tantrum begins, it has to run its course. Stay close; make sure your child is in a safe place where she is not going to hurt herself, and let her cry it out. Hug her if she'll let you. After she has calmed down, you can comfort her. Later, you can talk about what happened. "You were really upset. You had a big fuss. Now you're fine."
- 7 Creating an independent child:** Permit your child to function independently. Young children should be allowed to dress and feed themselves as soon as they are physically able to do so. As a child gets older, s/he has to be able to make her/his own decisions. A child has to be able to delay gratification to develop patience and independence.

TEN TIPS FOR PRESCHOOL CONTINUED

8 Preparing for preschool: Be prepared for separation. In preschool, other adults will take care of your child, and other children will challenge your child. If you do not trust your school, children will feel that wariness and carry resistance with them. You have to trust the school that you are sending your child to. Tell your child that you are excited for him, without making too big of a deal of it. Visit the school with your child.

9 Finding a preschool: Look at the classroom environment, inside and out; how does it look, how does it feel, and how is it organized? Who are the adults in the room? Are they playing with the children? Are they observing the children? Are there parents in the classroom? Who is the director? What is the philosophy and discipline model of the school? What is the teacher to child ratio? How are the children interacting with the other children? How are the children and the teachers interacting? How is the director interacting with her staff?

10 Potty training: Make sure that the child is showing signs of readiness. You really don't want to push it too fast or too quickly because you are going to provoke a stubborn response from the child, and that is just going to slow the whole process down. Arrange for practice sessions; scheduled sessions where your child sits on the toilet, timed around when the child is likely to eliminate. Use positive reinforcement.

The following expert interviews contributed to this "Ten Tips for Preschool": Betsy Braun Brown, MA, Daniel Asres, Daniel Siegel, MD, Janis Keyser, MA, Joanna Port, MEd, MSW, Lee Hausner, PhD, Mary Hartzell, M.Ed, Pete Stavinoha, PhD, Renae Plant, and Tina Bryson, PhD.