



Should Your Child Attend Preschool?

The answer to the question lies in your family's path of schooling. If you are sending your child to public, private or charter school, check their requirements for kindergarten. Are you comfortable preparing your child for their prerequisites? If you are, there is no need for preschool. If not, you'd better start shopping for one.

Pay close attention to staff. Visit. Ask other parents about their experience with the school. Check the website for comments and reviews. Google the school for complaints and check with the Better Business Bureau, Child Care Aware Website and The National Association for the Education of Young Children Website.

Think about your choices: Montessori, High Scope, Waldorf, Bank Street, Reggio Emilia, faith-based, teacher-led, child-centered, pre-K, co-operative, developmental. Consider your cost, the welcome factor, accredited or not, safety procedures, staff turnover, etc.

If you are going to homeschool, relax. Parenting is not a competition. Below are some suggestions for the parents of preschoolers regardless of school plans.

Read aloud to your child everyday. Enjoy books together. Make it a special time. Ask questions like "Where is the red fish?" "What did the bear say?" Use different voices. Talk about the pictures. Run your finger under the words as you read so children understand those funny things make sounds and we use them for language and that reading progresses left to right.

Begin a foreign language. Use simple phrases and commands. There are many methods and books available online or to buy.

Let children ask a thousand questions. Even the same ones. Questions are a sign they are ready to learn. Obviously the more questions the more ready they are. At least that is what I told my weary self.

Provide opportunities for them to group, sort, order, compare, measure, organize, match, count, identify shapes, recognize numbers and letters, predict and observe. Science activities and nature study are high interest at this age and great topics to explore.

Let them build, do puzzles, investigate and explore. Lead them to understand cause and effect. Provide costumes for role play. Give them lots of opportunities to develop motor skills. You may not think of it, but learning to bounce balls, ride bikes,

jump on one foot, etc. helps them gain coordination for the fine motor skills like writing.

Help them learn to do things for themselves. Making a sandwich, dressing, putting on coats, shoes, feeding the dog etc. builds confidence and fosters thoroughness. Allowing responsibility is a good way to give them value in the family too. They can make you or little brother a sandwich, set the table, and they feel important.

Continue this work ethic all through their life. The child who learns to paint the house and plant a garden alongside mom and dad will be able to do harder jobs when they're older. You will have given them the power of independence.