



On the Way to Kindergarten

Let's Get Ready for School



Filled with
activities for
families!



On the Way to Kindergarten

Is your child starting school soon? Try some of these activities or click the play button for a short video on each topic.



Family Health and Well-Being

It's common for children and their adults to have a range of feelings about starting school. Tuning-in to your needs will ensure you can be there for your child's needs too.



Nutrition and School Lunches

Support your child's energy, focus, and mood by following Canada's Food Guide. Start the day with breakfast and fuel up on good food and water during school nutrition breaks.



Speech, Language and Literacy

Talk, sing, read, and play together every day to nurture your child's speech and language skills. Make reading a part of your family's daily routine.



Social and Emotional Development

Unstructured free-play in nature will help to build a strong foundation for positive social skills and mental health. Play is the work of children, in kindergarten and beyond.



Movement Skills

Your child is learning to move their body. With time and practise, your child will grow in their abilities. Play that allows your child to take risks will also benefit their development.



Physical Health and Well-Being

Vision, oral health, sleep, immunization, sun safety, injury prevention, and screen time can have a big impact on kindergarten health and their transition to school.





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Consider these activities and this [VIDEO](#) as you and your child prepare for a healthy developmental leap to kindergarten.



Family Health and Well-Being

- Parents have a special role in supporting child and youth mental health.
- "Being with" your child promotes security.
- It's okay for you or your child to need help with emotions or feelings.

Transitions can bring about big feelings. The **HALT method** can be used as a way to check-in:

Hungry – food and water may be needed to restore energy

Angry – time alone, time to move, time in nature may help

Lonely – reconnect and be close to one another after time apart

Tired – rest and ensure you are getting enough sleep

Books About Feelings

The Colour Monster,
A Story About Emotions
by Anna Llenas

In My Heart,
A Book of Feelings
by Jo Witek





Your child may want to know what it's like at their new school. **Summer visits can help!**

- Check out the playground
- Pack a picnic to enjoy
- Practise walking or wheeling to and from school
- Contact your school about transition help (late August).



Helpful activities to enjoy with your child:

- Focus on Feelings ([video link](#)).
- Make a Book ([video link](#))
- Share Your Story ([video link](#)).
- Belly Breaths ([video link](#)).

Southwestern Public Health
1-800-922-0096
Ask to speak with a school
Public Health Nurse

Wellkin
1-877-539-0463

If you have questions or concerns, we are here to help!



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Nutrition and School Lunches

- Pack water or cold milk to drink
- Keep food safety in mind
- Offer a variety of food from Canada's Food Guide if you are able

Lunch Tips from Teachers and Dietitians alike!

- Pack fruits, veggies, protein rich foods, and whole grains.
- Pre-cut any packages that are hard for your child to open (granola bars and yogurt tubes can be tricky!)
- Lunch goes by quickly with new friends; look for time savers (peel and segment their orange)
- Use a thermos for reheated leftovers
- Prepare lunches the night before
- Practise opening containers

Water does wonders!
It improves oral health, energy
and your child's ability to focus.
Learn more at
[Unlock Food](#)





5 favourite ways to fill a thermos:

- Leftover spaghetti
- Smoothie
- Scrambled Eggs
- Taco in a bowl
- Oatmeal



Most students will have two nutrition breaks. Children usually have about 20 minutes to eat lunch at school. Your child may come home with food. Do not reuse food that goes bad. Check in with your child about the amount of food in their lunch and adjust what you pack if needed. Continue to offer a variety of foods and let your child decide how much to eat. Do not force them to eat their entire lunch if they are not hungry.

For more lunch ideas, check out:

[School Lunches Your Kids Will Munch](#)

Check with your school about their policy on peanuts or other foods that cannot be sent due to allergies. Find more information at [Food Allergy Canada](#)



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Speech, Language and Literacy

When you give children books, involve them in community programs, talk and listen to them, they will grow in their skill.

- Speech: sounds we make when we speak
- Language: words we understand and use
- Literacy: printed words we read or write

By the age of [3-4 years old \(video\)](#), most children will:

- Use longer sentences; may need help with grammar
- Ask and answer questions
- Be understood most of the time by strangers
- use 900-1000 different words
- Tell simple stories
- Follow two-part directions

Find more on this topic at [Tyke Talk](#)

"Parents and caregivers are a child's most important teacher and can make the biggest impact on their child's speech and language development."
([Tyke Talk](#))





Your child can practise how to:

- Say their first and last name
- State their age or birthdate
- Name 4 colours
- Play near and talk with other children during their play



Adults promote child development by:

Talking: describe, explain and narrate your daily activities

Writing: draw shapes and letters, squish, build, craft and create

Reading: with expression, pointing to printed words, discussing

Singing: songs, books or through daily activities

Playing: together and by creating opportunities with play partners

[Click here](#) to learn more about Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists.

Find a library near you in [Elgin](#), [Oxford](#), [St. Thomas](#) or [Woodstock](#).

If you have concerns about your child's speech, speak to your health care provider or a school Public Health Nurse.



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Social and Emotional Development

Your child will still need you to help them:

- Regulate and control their emotions
- Develop relationships with others
- Cooperate, share and build self-esteem

Support your child's social and emotional skills through:

- Dramatic play opportunities (costumes, props)
- Asking questions to promote sharing
- Screen-free play with trusted play partners
- Make-believe or pretend play; playing out fears
- Outdoor play, with thrilling and exciting risky play
- Board games such as snakes and ladders, playing cards, or games that use dice
- Exposure to other cultures and ideas

Routines and rituals deepen family connection and support your child during transition times.
"On Saturday mornings, we always..."





Your child is learning a lot about themselves.

- Foster independence (opening containers, dressing, toileting self, cleaning up a spill)
- Take note of what makes your child feel proud
- Model emotional regulation and name feelings
- Notice your child's unique strengths and talents



For more on this topic, see these resources:

- This [podcast](#) on risky play
- [The book](#), "Rest, Play, Grow" by Deborah Macnamara
- [This video](#) by child psychiatrist Dr. Jean Clinton,
- Creating family routines and rituals, [video](#)

Registered Early Childhood Educators and/or Educational Assistants are child development experts in your child's kindergarten class and are a trusted resource.



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Movement Skills

- Play to develop fine motor skills
 - hold a pencil, write or draw
- Move to develop gross motor skills
 - catch a ball, hop on one foot
- Your child will grow in coordination, confidence and fundamental movement skills

Risky or Adventurous Play

- Thrilling or exciting play, where there may be a chance of injury has positive benefits. Risky play can involve speed, height, tools or elements, rough & tumble, or a chance of getting lost (Sandsetter, 2009). Get outdoors and allow your child to get dirty! Prepare to send your child to school in clothing that allows them to play in all weather.
- Learn more about its benefits [here](#).

Your local [EarlyON Child and Family Centre](#) is a great place to explore and talk about your child's development with a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE).





Is my child on track with their movement skills?

The Looksee Checklist – a tool that features a short list of “yes” or “no” questions, allows parents and caregivers to screen their child and learn more about their milestones. Choose the tool that suits the current age of your child.



Follow these helpful links for more information and activities:

[Raising Physically Literate Kids](#)

[Kindergarten Activities: Have a Ball Together](#)

[24h Movement Guidelines](#)

[Jumpstart Canada](#): youth aged 4-18 may be eligible for a grant

[How to Teach your Child to Ride a Bike](#)

There are many ways Occupational Therapists can help your child succeed in school. Speak to your health care provider or [click here](#) to learn more about OTs.



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Physical Health and Well-Being

- **Screen:** Eyes (seeing well), ears (hearing well) and mouth (teeth and gums). Visit your family health care provider for a well-child visit at 4-6 years of age.
- **Protect:** Immunize, wear a helmet, use the correct car seat or booster seat, be sun safe by using a sun hat and sunglasses. Add sunscreen to your morning routine.
- **Promote and Model:** Healthy family media habits, regular bed times and wake times.

Find answers to common health questions and other information:

Canadian Pediatric Society,
[Caring for Kids](#) website





Immunization Records

Parents need to report all childhood immunizations to public health. Before school starts, you can report your child's immunizations online, [click here](#).



Helpful links for parents:

- [Sleep](#): 3 and 4 year-olds need 10-13h every night
- [Toilet Learning](#)
- [Tick Bite Prevention](#) or submit a tick photo on [etick.ca](#)
- [Guide to Common Childhood Infections](#)
- [Head Lice](#) and [Head Lice](#) FAQ
- Healthy [Bowel Habits](#)
- Online [Urgent Care](#) in Ontario
- [Booster seats](#): used until age 8 OR 80lbs OR 145cm tall

Need to find a provider?

[Dentist](#) (teeth)

[Healthy Smiles Program](#) (teeth),
Family Doctor: [Health Care Connect](#)

[Optometrist](#) (eyes)

[Settlement Services in Schools](#)
[Crisis Supports](#), [Reach Out](#)



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The Healthy Schools Team thanks those that contributed to this resource:

- Family Doctors
- Grandparents
- Kindergarten Teachers
- Learning Coordinators
- Librarians
- Occupational Therapists
- Optometrists
- Mental Health Professionals
- Parents and Caregivers
- Principals
- Public Health Nurses, Healthy Schools Team
- Registered Dietitians
- Registered Early Childhood Educators
- School Boards
- Speech Language Pathologists

[Watch this video from the SWPH Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Ninh Tran, as he sends well wishes & tips for kindergarteners and their families.](#)