



Top 10 Skills for Children Entering Kindergarten

According to 120 pre-k and kindergarten educators across Southwest PA

Hi5! collaborated with a group of pre-k and kindergarten teachers to develop a list of academic, social, emotional, and physical skills for children entering kindergarten based on the PA Early Learning Standards. A list of more than 30 skills was sent to educators in school districts, child care programs, and Head Start programs throughout the region—including Allegheny, Butler, Fayette, Greene, and Westmoreland counties.

The purpose of this exercise was to develop a useful tool for parents/caregivers of children ages birth to five in the SWPA region by teachers in the SWPA region. Over 120 pre-k and kindergarten educators responded to share their expertise and insight.

The top skills include:

1. Following rules and routines*
2. Following simple one- and two-step directions*
3. Writing their own name
4. Recognizing some letters (8-12) from the alphabet (upper and lower case)
5. Interacting appropriately with peers during play, both in reciprocal play activities and communication
6. Expressing and communicating wants and needs
7. Asking for help from adults and peers, when needed
8. Responding to adults and peers appropriately in conversations
9. Recognizing written numbers to 10
10. Expressing feelings appropriately to a variety of situations

* The top two skills were selected by more than 90% of respondents.

Honorable mentions

- Differentiating between letters, numbers, and words
- Understanding the difference between appropriate and inappropriate ways to resolve conflict



“I think the most important thing for children entering kindergarten is being able to write their own name and follow rules/routines. Many academic skills will be taught and learned as the year goes on. However, being able to function in the classroom should be top priority so the other skills can fall into place.”

KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

Resources

Prepare for Kindergarten with resources from Pennsylvania’s Promise for Children: State resources that include activity guides and developmental milestone lists. You can sign up for the *Kindergarten, Here I Come!* newsletter.

Developmentally Appropriate Parenting: A compilation of digital resources that highlight several early childhood topics to support parents and caregivers who are caring for young children.

Specific guidance on transitioning to kindergarten: A guide for families that explains why kindergarten transition matters, about common steps to prepare for, and strategies that can help.

WQED and Laurel Highlands School District checklist: An expanded list of skills aligned with WQED PBS Kids resources.

Early Intervention Transition: Preschool Programs to School-Aged Programs: The transition process for the preschool EI program for children entering kindergarten to continue receiving special education support.

Support for Families with Dual Language Learners: The Office of Head Start’s Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center offers additional considerations and resources to support children who are dual language learners.

Check with your school district: If your child is five or turning five, reach out to your school district about the registration process. Many districts have online registration. Early and on-time registration enables you to start building a relationship with your child’s school and helps prepare the school and teachers to welcome your child.

Note: The purpose of this list of skills and resources is to support families and their young children as they prepare for kindergarten. When a child turns five and meets their district’s birthdate requirement, it is time to register whether or not a child has mastered every skill listed.