

Is There Homework in Kindergarten?

or

35 Things You Can Do at Home to Help Your Child This Year

Many parents ask if their child will be assigned homework to do on a regular basis in kindergarten. My answer is "yes and no". From time to time I will send home projects for your children to work on with the family to help broaden or enhance their understanding of a theme or topic we are working on in class.

However, I will not be sending homework in the traditional sense of weekly or nightly, independent, paper-and-pencil "skill drills" like children do in upper grades. I do not feel that homework of this kind is appropriate for young children. Kindergarten students need to practice with as many concrete, hands-on experiences as they can. This helps them lay a foundation of basic concepts that can be built upon in time.

If you are wondering what your child should be doing instead of homework to help him/her build those basic concepts at home, here is a list of activities that are simple, take little time or equipment, and help your child build language and math skills:

1. **READ** — Read to your child from a wide range of books: fiction and non-fiction, picture books, chapter books, magazines, etc.

2. **READ** — Read a book that your child is

familiar with or a book that has a high level of repetition in it and have your child read the book *with* you.

3. **READ** — Give your child wordless books or books that he/she has memorized and have him/her "read" them to you or to a sibling to help your child build confidence and fluency.

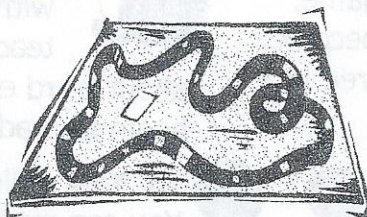
4. Turn off the TV! Television is a passive entertainment experience which requires very little from your child except attention. Engage your child in as many active experiences as possible.

5. Play board games — Board games usually require the use of a spinner or dice which help your child build one-to-one correspondence, counting skills, addition/subtraction skill, and problem solving. They

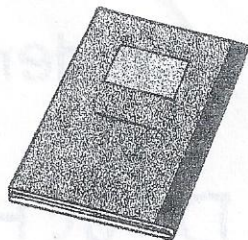
also teach your child how to take turns and handle conflict (losing or winning) appropriately.

6. Cook with your child — Cooking requires your child to measure, count, and clean up!

7. Get your child a public library card (and use it at least twice a month) — Studies show that children are more likely to read books that they have selected than books that have been selected for them.

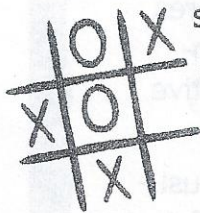


8. Give your child a journal — A notebook or even some paper stapled together make a great place for a child to develop as a beginning writer even if all he/she does is draw pictures or "scribble" in it. Those are both developmental stages of writing. Eventually, your child will begin to form letters and experiment with words.



9. Teach your child nursery rhymes and songs — Rhymes and songs teach your child about predictable text, patterned language, word families, and how words that sound the same or that rhyme may look very different from each other.

10. Play tic-tac-toe — As simple as it seems, teaching your child to play tic-tac-toe helps him/her build basic logical reasoning skill. Once he/she is good enough to win a few games or reach a tie/"cat" game, switch the rules so the winner becomes the person who does *not* get three in a row.



11. Give your child pocket change to sort — It will allow children to see the physical differences and similarities among the coins and it can later be built upon to teach how much each coin is worth and how to add and subtract coin amounts.

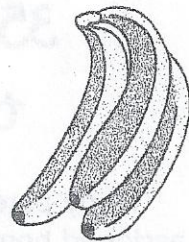


12. Honor your child's work — Many parents have a refrigerator full of their children's work. Set aside a special place in your home to display your child's work. This teaches your child to take pride in academic and artistic endeavors.

13. **READ WITH YOUR CHILD**

14. Play games in the car — Games you used to play in the car like the alphabet game, 20 questions, count the cows, license plate games, count the cars, etc. teach your child to sort, count, use deductive reasoning, and pay attention to environmental print.

15. Play grocery store games — Ask your child to walk a few steps ahead in every department or aisle to point out the bananas, the canned peas, or the Rice Krispies for you. This helps your child build early reading skill.



16. Play beginning sound games — Ask your child to think of all the words he/she can that begin with a particular sound or letter. This teaches your child to look at a beginning letter to help him/her predict a word he/she is unfamiliar with.



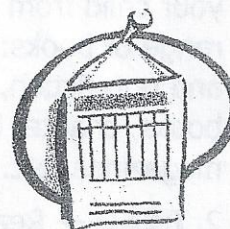
17. Play rhyming games — Ask your child to think of all the words he/she can that rhyme with another word. This teaches children to think



about word endings which will help as they begin to read and predict new words.

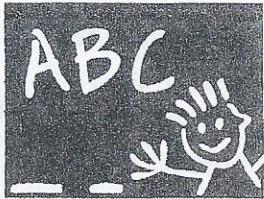
18. Your child should see you read, too — You can model good reading habits by reading magazines, newspapers, and books that interest you. When you read for your own pleasure, you are sending a message to your child that reading is important and entertaining.

19. Give your child a calendar — Post a family calendar in the kitchen or your child's own calendar in his/her room. Write in dates that are important to him/her like soccer practice, a church function, a birthday party, a trip to the library, or whatever. It helps your child gain a clearer understanding of calendar con-



cepts and may help cut down on the "When are we going to go...?"

20. Play with letters — Get your child a set of alphabet magnets, write each letter on an index card, or go through old magazines with your child and cut out each letter.



Then, have your child play with the letters making words, writing his/her name, or asking him/her to think of words that begin with certain letters. You may want to find or draw pictures of words that begin with those letters to reinforce your child's understanding of letter-sound correspondences.

21. Play with numbers — Most magnetic alphabet sets also contain the digits 0-9. If not, buy a set, write a set, or cut out a set. Then, have your child count out objects that correspond to those numbers. Show your child how we combine digits to make bigger numbers (e.g. a "1" and a "2" can be used to make "12" and "21".)

22. Play a sorting game — Play a game with your child where he/she has to find something in your house that is a particular shape, color, or size. Sorting and classifying are major mathematical and scientific skills that young children can work on. You could even have your child help sort laundry and pair up socks!

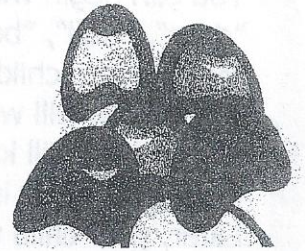


23. Grow something — Whether it is a single potted plant or a backyard garden, give your child the responsibility for taking care of a plant. He/She will learn a lot about the life cycles and basic needs of plants from seed to flower to ... well, compost in some cases.

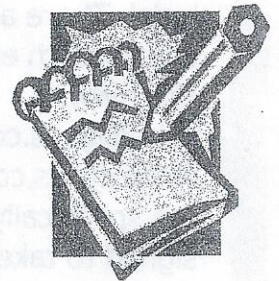
24. Feed something — Whether your child helps take care of a family pet or assists in feeding wild birds or butterflies, give your

child the responsibility for taking care of an animal. It teaches your child respect for all living things and about what animals need to survive and grow.

25. Play the "bean game" — As your child becomes more comfortable with numbers you can play this game with any small set of objects (the original game was played with dry beans). Show your child five beans. Now, put your hands behind your back and put part of the five in one hand and keep the other part in the other hand. Then, put both hands in front of you, but only open one hand. Ask your child how many more beans would have to be in the closed hand to make five. (Example, you open your right hand to reveal three beans and your child will have to figure out that you have two more beans in your closed left hand.) Once your child can easily predict all the ways to make five try six. Do not mix numbers in the beginning. Start with five and stick with five. Your child's ability to predict and maintain one-to-one correspondence can be easily tripped up if you do more than one number during a game.



26. Write notes — Leave your child notes in his/her room, in a lunch box, on a message board, or even better, mail them to your child. Have your child write notes to the teacher about lost library books or forgotten Monday folder items. Encourage your child to write "thank you" notes for gifts he/she may receive and write them to your child if he/she gives you a present. Letter and note writing give your child a meaning and purpose



for learning to write well. At first he/she may have to copy most of the words. Eventually, your child will be able to generate his/her own notes.

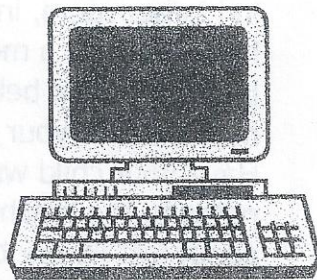
27. READ TO YOUR CHILD

28. Label things — Start off small, like in your child's room, and label common objects with signs written on index cards. You can begin with things as simple as "door", "wall", "bed", "lamp", etc. The more print a child is exposed to, the more like he/she will work to decipher it. At first he/she will know that the label says lamp because it is taped to the lamp. Later, your child will actually know that "l-a-m-p" is the word lamp.

29. Explore a hobby — Children with varied interests tend to be more successful in school. Whether it is riding bikes, taking ballet, painting, collecting Pokemon cards, catching bugs, learning about dinosaurs, playing a sport, or building with Lego's, a hobby helps boost your child's self-esteem and gives him/her a reason to read and ideas to write about.



30. Explore the Internet — The web is a great source for all kinds of educational and informative material. There are even search engines like www.yahoo.com and www.ajkids.com that are specifically designed to take kids to educational websites (and screen out objectionable material). It is a great way to find stories, games, and non-fiction materials for areas that interest your child.



31. Put your child to work — Daily household chores also translate into academic success. Children who have assigned tasks to help out around the house learn a sense of responsibility and a need to take care of things. Since most of the materials in the classroom have to be shared by all the students and cleaned up by the end of the day, daily "chores" are a large part of teaching personal responsibility in kindergarten.

32. Give your child a paintbrush — or crayons or modeling clay or any media that allows your child to creatively express his/her thoughts. Art is a great way to help children get ideas, feelings, and dreams down on paper (or canvas or wherever). This same process will eventually evolve into writing.

33. Play cards — Children's card games like "Go Fish", "Crazy 8's", "Uno", or "Old Maid" enhance a child's ability to recognize numerals and their corresponding quantities and help build sorting skill.

34. Give your child a day off — If your child seems worn out from school, church, scouts, sports, friends, etc., give your child a day off every once in a while. Kids can get burned out, too.

35. Oh, and did I mention that you should **READ WITH YOUR CHILD?** The best way for a child to learn to read is to practice reading every single day. There is no greater magic to reading instruction than to simply give a child a wide variety of books to practice with over and over again. As you read with your child, point out things like periods and question marks, capital letters, where to begin reading, where to go at the end of a line, left-to-right, who the author is, and that the pictures are in books to help us figure out what the words mean.

Every day should be an opportunity for learning.