



# Strong Start to Kindergarten

## A Parent & Caregiver Activity Guide



# Together we can help every child have a stronger start to Kindergarten!



## Help Your Child Get Ready for Kindergarten

### What is this book?

This book has many fun, easy ideas to help your child get ready for kindergarten. Most activities in the book are designed for children ages 3 to 5.

### What if my child is younger than 3?

Many of these activities build on earlier skills your child can learn with you. Some of those are shown on pages 8 and 9. You can talk, read and sing with children at any age!

### What if my child has special needs?

Children develop at different rates. Some of these activities may need to be modified for any child, including children with special needs.

### How do I use this book?

There are five important parts. For each part, there are goals for your child. There are ideas for your child to practice different skills.

### Different Kinds of Learning

### Types of Skills

#1 Social Emotional	Manages feelings and relationships
#2 Language	Speaks and listens to others
#3 Cognitive	Asks questions about the world
#4 Early Literacy	Shows interest in words and books
#5 Early Mathematics	Plays with numbers and shapes



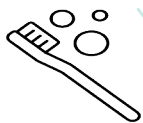
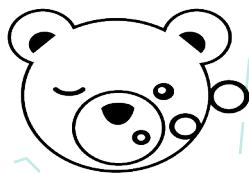
## Social Emotional: Manages Feelings and Relationships

### Regulates Own Emotions and Behaviors

#### Manages Feelings

##### Activities:

- Count to ten, slowly
- Practice breathing by blowing bubbles
- Pretend to be in your own bubble to teach child to stay in their own space
- Perform loud and quiet follow the leader action game to practice using a quiet voice



#### Takes Care of Self

##### Activities:

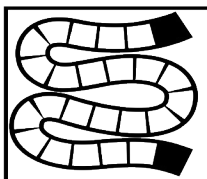
- Let them put on, take off and put away coat and shoes
- Practice brushing own teeth
- Pack own snack
- Fill up own cup of water at the sink



#### Follows Rules

##### Activities:

- Give a job or chore at home
- Play board games that include following directions



### Makes Good Friends

#### Forms Relationships with Adults

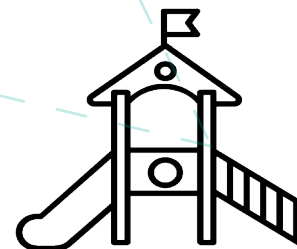
##### Activities:

- Talk about their day
- Sing a song together
- Have a bedtime routine
- Eat meals together
- Have a consistent good-bye routine

#### Plays Well with Other Children

##### Activities:

- Observe them during family gatherings
- Take them to a park
- Invite a friend over



#### Understands Others Feelings

##### Activities:

- Talk about a time they felt happy or sad
- Play "Guess my Feelings" game by making mad, happy, surprised and other faces
- Ask "what makes you happy?"

### Plays Well in a Large Group

#### Thinks About Other People and Self

##### Activities:

- Helps wash the dishes
- Pick three kind things to do for others in a week



#### Asks for Help

##### Activities:

- Let them come for help, don't jump in until needed
- Talk the child through a problem instead of solving it for them



## Language: Speaks and Listens to Others

### Uses Language to Express Thoughts and Needs

#### Speaks Clearly so Others Understand

##### Activities:

- Sing songs with the child
- Play "telephone" at the dinner table by whispering messages in your child's ear and have them pass the message along by whispering in the next person's ear. See if the message is the same when it gets back to you



#### Uses Correct Words When Speaking

##### Activities:

- Play "I'm thinking of..."  
(Child describes an object or animal without telling you what it is, adult has to guess what the child is thinking of)
- Have your child tell you what they see in a picture

#### Tells About Another Time and Place

##### Activities:

- Talk about their day (what happened first, next and last)
- Play sports announcer game (describe what is happening while you are doing it., i.e. Cooking: first, take out the bowl, next take out the spoon, then pour the milk..., i.e. Cleaning dishes: first I rinse the cup, then I get the scrubber, next...)

## Listens to and Understands Increasingly Complex Language

#### Understands Simple Words, Questions and Stories

##### Activities:

- Make up a story & ask what will happen next
- Start a story with "Once upon a time" and take turns saying what comes next
- Play "Using your senses" game  
(close eyes while touching & listening to the sound an object makes, describe what the object is and what it is used for)



#### Follows Directions That Have More Than Two Steps

##### Activities:

- Be the "Leader" and have your child imitate what you do
- Play the Clean Up Game (touch your nose and pick up a lego, pick up a book and jump)
- Pretend you're going to the store and have the child imagine what you are going to buy



## Talks with Others and Takes Turns in Conversation

#### Talks with Others and Takes Turns in Conversation

##### Activities:

- Practice saying hello to others, shake hands, say thank you to people
- Have a conversation with people on the phone
- Play freeze dance by pausing music during a dance party to practice waiting
- Talk about why it's important to listen and take turns



**Cognitive:**  
**Asks Questions**  
**About the World**

## Motivated to Learn

**Pays Attention**

**Activities:**

- Eat meals together and talk about their day
- Make a grocery store scavenger hunt



**Has and Accepts New Ideas**

**Activities:**

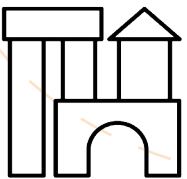
- Make an obstacle course (What is the fastest way to do this, what objects work better, how can they best be used)
- Ask, "How do you think we can solve that problem" (i.e. "oh no, it's going to rain today and we can't go to the park, how do you think we can solve this problem?")



**Sticks with Challenging Tasks, Can Ignore**  
**Most Distractions**

**Activities:**

- Talk them through what they think they cannot do
- Play Memory Game (make your own) by matching pictures or shapes or colors



**Shows Curiosity to Learn**

**Activities:**

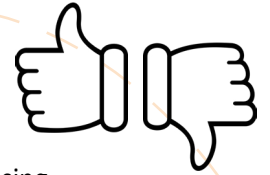
- Build with blocks, boxes, cups, etc. Ask what can you make, how high can it go, what shape is it?
- Play the "I Wonder" game (I wonder what would happen if you turned into a bumble bee or I wonder what would happen if we leave the ice in the sun)

## Remembers and Connects Experiences

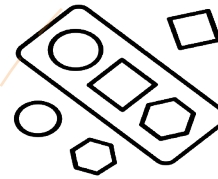
**Remembers and Connects Experiences**

**Activities:**

- Ask them to tell you one good thing they liked and one thing they didn't like about their day
- Identify four objects, take one away, ask what's missing
- Play "one of these things does not belong" (put out three objects with something in common and one that does not belong)



## Groups Objects



**Can Put Like Objects Together**

**Activities:**

- Sort items by similarity
- Help sort laundry/Help put away dishes
- Find things in the room that are the same color

## Uses Symbols and Images to Represent Something Not Present

**Draws and Builds to Represent Ideas**

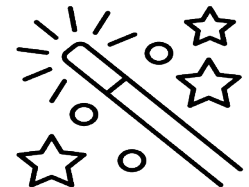
**Activities:**

- Have a child read a book to you by looking at the pictures
- Use a stick as a magic wand

**Pretends When Playing**

**Activities:**

- Play school and have the child be the teacher
- Be in an imaginary world while your child is pretending to be something or someone else
- Act out stories
- Let them play pretend with your clothes, towels, sheets or fabric







# IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN — TALK, READ, AND SING TOGETHER EVERY DAY!

Learn more about your baby by watching for developmental milestones. Smiling, cooing, and babbling are just a few. Your baby will show you many more milestones in how he plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves! Look for your child's milestones regularly and share his progress with the doctor at every well-child visit.

**TIP:** Respond to your baby's first smiles, gurgles, and coos — she's talking to you and wants you to talk, too!

## BIRTH TO 2 MONTHS

- Coos, makes gurgling sounds
- Turns head toward sounds



## 4 MONTHS

- Begins to babble
- Babbles with expression and copies sounds he hears



**TIP:** Hold and talk to your baby; smile and be cheerful while you do.

## 6 MONTHS

- Responds to sounds by making sounds
- Responds to own name
- Begins to say consonant sounds (jabbering with "m," "b")



**TIP:** Read books to your baby every day. Praise him when he babbles and "reads" too.

## 9 MONTHS

- Understands "no"
- Makes a lot of different sounds like "mamamama" and "babababab"

## 2 YEARS

- Points to things or pictures when named
- Says sentences with 2 to 4 words
- Follows simple instructions

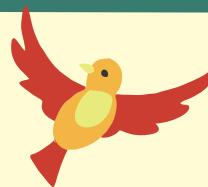
## 18 MONTHS

- Says several single words
- Points to show someone what he wants

**TIP:** When you read with your child, have her turn the pages. Take turns labeling pictures with your child.

## 12 MONTHS

- Uses simple gestures, like shaking head "no" or waving "bye-bye"
- Tries to say words you say



**TIP:** Describe what your baby is looking at; for example, "red, round ball."



## 3 YEARS

- Follows instructions with 2 or 3 steps
- Talks well enough for strangers to understand most of the time
- Carries on a conversation using 2 to 3 sentences

## 4 YEARS

- Tells stories
- Can say first and last name
- Knows some basic rules of grammar, such as correctly using "he" or "she"

## 5 YEARS

- Speaks very clearly
- Says name and address
- Uses future tense; for example, "Grandma will be here."



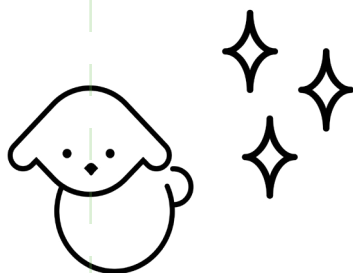
## Early Literacy: Shows Interest in Words and Books

### Demonstrates Knowledge of Sounds in Words

#### Notices Rhyming Words

##### Activities:

- Sing nursery rhymes
- Rhyme words with their name
- Sing name rhyming song (Bob, Bob, fo fob, Banana Fana Mo Mob)



#### Matches Beginning Sounds of Words

##### Activities:

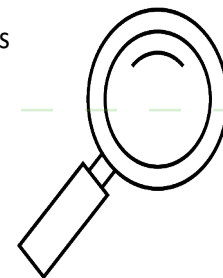
- Take an everyday song and change the beginning sound to be the same for every word (Bow, bow, bow bour boat)
- Change the first letter in every word you say to the same letter ("So Bob, how was your day?" becomes "So Sob, sow sas sour say?")

### Demonstrates Knowledge of the Alphabet

#### Knows Some Alphabet Letters

##### Activities:

- Play "I Spy Letters" at the store or while walking outside ("I spy with my little eye the letter A - can you see where it is?")
- Search for letters in ABC order while out running errands
- Draw letters in shaving cream in the bathtub



#### Knows Some Alphabet Letter Sounds

##### Activities:

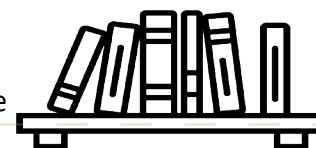
- Sing Alphabet songs

### Demonstrates Knowledge of Print and Its Uses

#### Uses and Understands Books

##### Activities:

- Borrow from Free Little Libraries
- Go to free story time at the library or bookstore
- Check out books from libraries
- Write a story, make it into a book using paper and tape or stapler



#### Understands that Words are From Left to Right

##### Activities:

- Read directions for a recipe
- Underline words with finger while reading
- Point to signs in stores or on the road



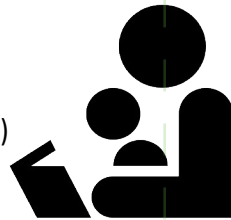
## Early Literacy (cont'd.): Shows Interest in Words and Books

### Understands and Responds to Books and Other Print

#### Interacts While Book is Being Read

##### Activities:

- Ask questions before you turn the page ("What do you think will happen next in the story?")
- Picture Walk (look at pictures in a book and ask "what is happening before you start reading the story?")



#### Uses Beginner Reading Skills

##### Activities:

- Have child "read" the story to you using the pictures to tell the story
- Pretend to read upside down to get the child to correct you

#### Retells Stories

##### Activities:

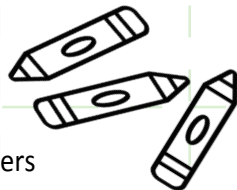
- Use stuffed animals or action figures to tell a story together
- Have your child "read" you a bedtime story using a favorite book
- Tell each other stories about your day

### Demonstrates Early Writing Skills

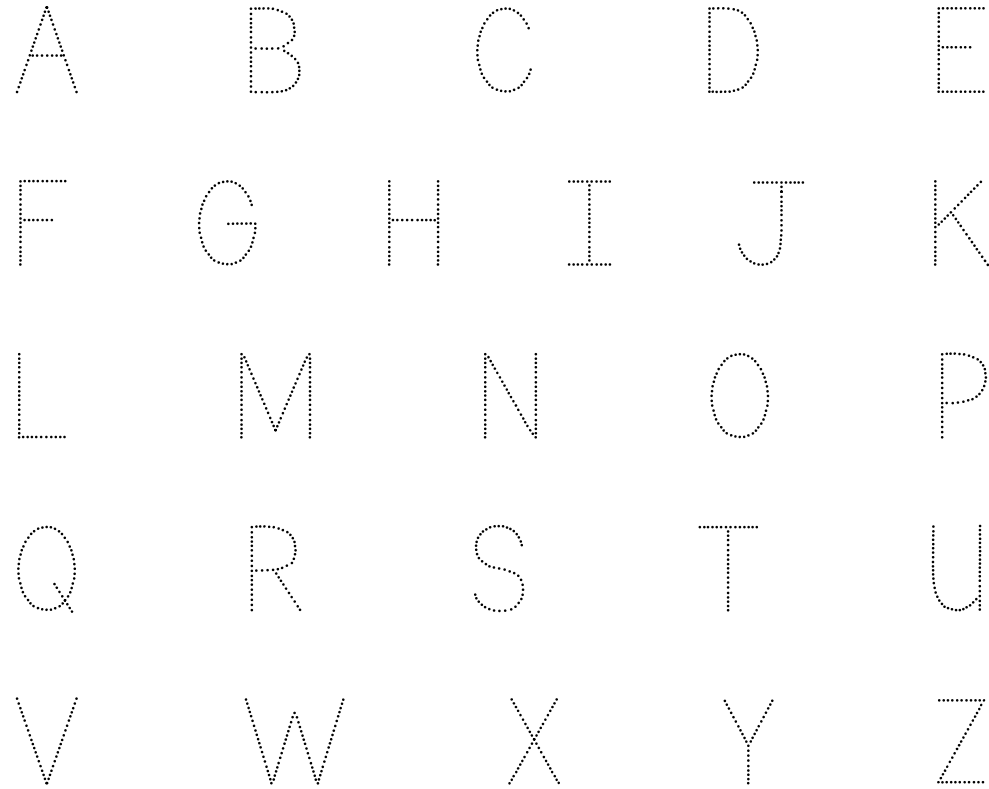
#### Writes Name

##### Activities:

- Draw with crayons
- Practice drawing shapes (circles, triangles, squares)
- Write their name in dots and have them trace the letters
- Write their name, have them trace it with a q-tip



Practice here:



Four sets of horizontal lines for writing practice, each consisting of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.



1  
2  
3

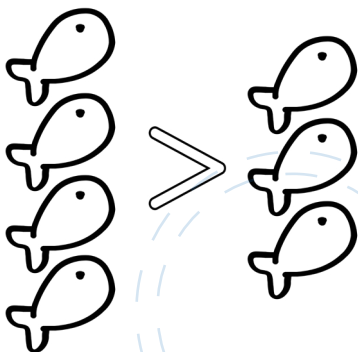
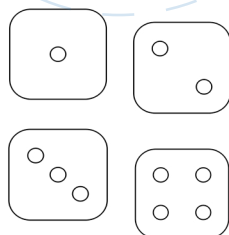
## Early Mathematics: Plays with Numbers and Shapes

### Understands Numbers

#### Can Count Out Loud

##### Activities:

- Make a game of counting items (count how many stairs you walk up, count how many things are a certain color in a room, how many trees do you see)



#### Understands “How Many” at a Glance for 2 or 3 Items

##### Activities:

- Give 2 amounts of goldfish crackers, tell them to eat the one that has more
- Put four small items (rocks, coins, raisins, etc.) in one hand and three the other, have them guess which has more

#### Connects Numbers with an Amount

##### Activities:

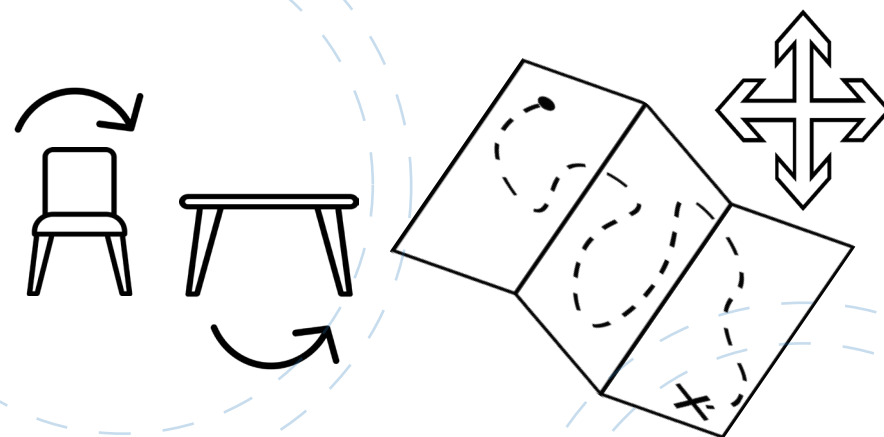
- Draw circles with numbers in them, have them place that many objects in the circle
- Use chalk to draw a circle and write a number in the center, have the child jump that many times in the circle

### Explores and Describes Spatial Relationships with Shapes

Understands Spatial Relationships (under, over, next to, etc.)

##### Activities:

- Create an obstacle course with directions: go over the chair, under the table
- Create a scavenger or treasure hunt with directionality clues

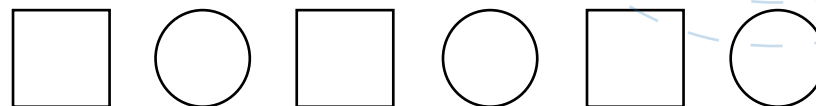


### Demonstrates Knowledge of Patterns

#### Can Make and Repeat Patterns

##### Activities:

- Listen and follow songs with directions (Cha Cha Slide, Chicken Dance)
- Create clapping and stomping patterns



My Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What activities I liked to do (draw a picture!):

What activities my grown-up liked to do (draw a picture!):

This guide was made possible by Evanston Cradle to Career and is supported by all of its partners.

#### Public Sector Partners

- City of Evanston
- Evanston Department of Health and Human Services
- Evanston Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services
- Evanston Police Department
- Evanston Public Library
- Evanston Township High School
- Evanston/Skokie School District 65

#### Academic Institutions

- Northwestern University
- Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
- Oakton Community College

#### Health Care Providers

- NorthShore University Health System
- Erie Family Health Care Center

#### Faith-Based Community

- St. Nicholas Catholic Church
- Evanston Own It (a coalition of churches from the 5th Ward)

#### Philanthropic Community

- Evanston Community Foundation
- United Way North-Northwest

#### Other Nonprofit Organizations

- Books and Breakfast
- Bundled Blessings
- Caring Outreach by Parents In Evanston (COPE)
- Center for Independent Futures
- Cherry Preschool
- Childcare Network of Evanston
- Connections for the Homeless
- Covenant Nursery School
- Curt's Cafe
- Evanston CASE
- Evanston Chamber of Commerce
- Evanston Scholars
- Family Focus
- Infant Welfare Society of Evanston
- Learning Bridge Early Education Center
- Literacy Works
- McGaw YMCA
- Metropolitan Family Services
- Moran Center for Youth Advocacy
- Open Studio Project
- Peer Services
- Rainbows for All Children
- Reba Early Learning Center
- School for Little Children
- Unity Preschool
- Youth Job Center
- Y.O.U.
- YWCA Evanston/North Shore

## Why is this guide important?

When children practice the activities in this book they can have a stronger start to kindergarten.

## What if I have questions?

If you have more questions, talk to your child's preschool teacher or home visitor. The activities in this guide are based on the Evanston/Skokie School District 65's *Strong Start to Kindergarten Goals for Educators*, which can be found at [www.district65.net/kindergarten](http://www.district65.net/kindergarten)

## Good to know:

- Interested in more activities to engage your little one?  
Join the Talk, Read, Sing Program and receive text messages with fun things to do. Text COE TRS1 to 468311
- Evanston/Skokie School District 65 kindergarten registration starts the first week of March.  
Visit [www.district65.net/kindergarten](http://www.district65.net/kindergarten) for details!



**EVANSTON**  
**CRADLE TO CAREER**



**Evanston / Skokie**  
**School District 65**  
*Every Child, Every Day, Whatever It Takes.*