

Getting Ready for School

A Parent's Guide



Healthy Child Manitoba
Putting children and families first

Manitoba





Ready, Set, Go!

Your child is learning the skills needed for Kindergarten long before the first day of school. It is never too early – or too late – to help your child gain the physical,

social, emotional, literacy, numeracy and communication skills they will need. This booklet will show you how to give your child the best start for school.

Ready Preschoolers: Tips for parents and caregivers



Art and Music

Introduce preschoolers to the world of art and music and they will gain creativity, independence and confidence.

- Art supplies such as crayons, pencils, children's scissors, glue, scrap paper and old magazines provide preschoolers with the tools to create their own masterpieces.
- Expose preschoolers to the many beautiful kinds of music. Encourage them to create their own music and dances with bells, drums and shakers.





Different Cultures and Traditions

Expose preschoolers to the many different cultures and traditions in our world and they will gain the important skills of understanding, empathy and social responsibility.

- Explore with your preschooler the different cultures that make up our world. Across the province and all year round, you can find pow wows, museums, outdoor concerts, theatre, festivals and more.

- See Manitoba's calendar of cultural events at: www.travelmanitoba.com or phone the Multiculturalism Secretariat at **204-945-5632**.



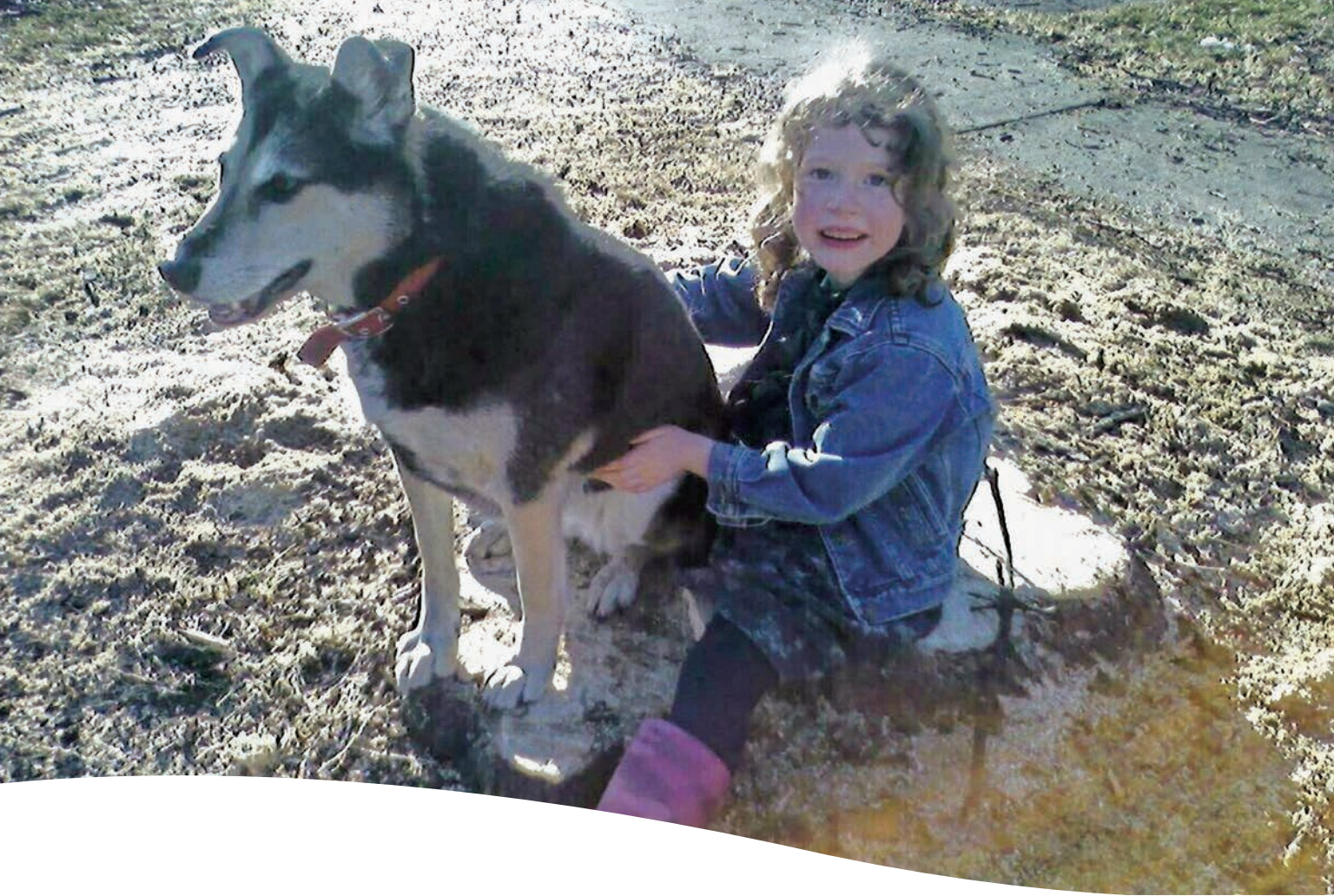


Creative Play

Creative play is a natural environment for learning. Children's books, fridge magnet letters and numbers and building blocks help your preschooler develop literacy and numeracy skills, while having fun!

- Provide preschoolers with safe tools and spaces for them to build, create and use their imagination. You don't need to spend money on expensive toys, the things you have around the house work great. You can use household items like pots and pans, plastic containers, small tins, wooden spoons, cushions, etc. – all make great building toys for creative play.
- Encourage your preschooler to play dress-up. Garage sales are great places to find costumes and dress-up clothes.
- Encourage preschoolers to play 'teacher' with their favourite books and a 'classroom' of stuffed toys or dolls.
- Bake cookies, muffins or bannock together. Let your preschooler help measure out the ingredients with you to learn numeracy skills.





Outdoor Play

A child gains so much from outdoor free play. Organized activities are important, but so is outdoor play. And it's free!

- Always supervise your preschooler to make sure they don't wander away, and that they're safe, but give them some freedom to explore these safe places.
- Spring is a time of bloom. Plant a garden with your preschooler. So much about nature can be learned by helping you plant seeds and watching them grow and bloom. If you live in an apartment, windowsill gardens are lots of fun!
- Summer and autumn are great times for exploring nature with your preschooler. Walk around your neighbourhood, play in the sand, take nature walks, look for 'treasure,' build an inukshuk, jump in the leaves.
- Winter may be a tempting time to stay indoors, but it is a great time for outdoor free play – and the more you move, the warmer you stay! Build a snow fort, a quinzhee, or snowperson. Or try tobogganing, snowshoeing or skating.



Family and Community

As a parent, you are your child's first teacher, but relationships with family members, elders, neighbours and other children provide your preschooler with experiences to learn from others.

- Family visits provide you with the support you need as a parent and provide your preschooler with opportunities to play with other children and family members.
- Parent-child play groups provide great opportunities to meet other parents and provide your preschooler with time to play with other children.





TV Tips

Research shows that children under two years old should have no screen time (TV, videos, video games). The first two years of a child's life are a critical time for brain development, and TV, videos and video games get in the way of exploring, learning and playing with other children, parents and family members.

- Know what your preschooler is watching – choose certain stations that don't play commercials during children's programs, and select children's videos and games that are educational as well as entertaining.
- Watch your preschooler's favourite show together – talk together about the show and build your child's communication skills.
- Use your preschooler's favourite TV character to your advantage – find books or puzzles based on their favourite characters to get them interested in reading and learning.
- Don't let your preschooler watch adult programs (newscasts, crime dramas, soap operas). Research shows that children might actually be absorbing these scenes. Watch adult programs when infants and young children are not around or have gone to bed.





Quality Time

The most important thing you can do as a parent is to create quality time between you and your preschooler. Quality time means giving your child your full attention – talking with them, showing interest in their stories and showing them how much you love them. Quality time is fun for both of you; it's a natural way of teaching children the skills they need for school.

Life is busy, and some days it may feel like a struggle to set aside quality time with your preschooler. But don't worry – quality time with your child can happen anywhere, anytime.

- **In the car, on a walk or on the bus,** sing songs together, count, talk about what you see in your neighbourhood or play the game I Spy.

- **Meal time** – whether making dinner together or eating together – mealtimes is a great time to talk with preschoolers. Ask questions about their day, listen and focus your attention on them as they tell you their stories.
- **Bath time** is a special time to connect and relax as they play in the tub. Praise them for something they learned that day and tell them how much you love them.
- **At bed time** cuddle, read or sing with preschoolers, and end the day in a happy and positive way.





Taking Care of Yourself

Parenting is the most rewarding job you'll ever know, but it also comes with many challenges and pressures. To be the best parent you can be, you must take care of yourself.

- **Slow down** - too many structured activities for your child will wear you both out. Play at home is just as important for children's development.
- **Take time for yourself** - sleep, regular exercise and healthy eating are essential to your health, and these healthy habits are important to model for your child.
- **Find support** - all parents can benefit from parenting support networks and programs, and there are many to choose from to best suit your needs. To find out more about the programs being offered in your community visit: www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/parentchild





Is my preschooler ready for Kindergarten?

Being ready for Kindergarten involves more than literacy skills. Your preschooler will need skills in all areas of development for the best start to school.

Physical skills include:

- holding and using a pen, crayons, scissors
- climbing stairs independently
- using the washroom independently
- putting on and taking off outdoor clothing and shoes

Social and emotional skills include:

- usually getting along with other children
- helping and sharing with others
- following rules and short two-step instructions
- learning to take turns
- showing curiosity about new ideas

Literacy and numeracy skills include:

- showing interest in books and pictures
- recognizing some letters like those on a stop sign or in their own name
- beginning to print their own name
- showing interest in numbers and counting
- understanding simple time concepts such as yesterday, today and tomorrow

Communication skills include:

- showing interest and curiosity about the world
- asking questions about what they see and hear
- taking part in imaginative play
- listening to and telling stories
- asking for help



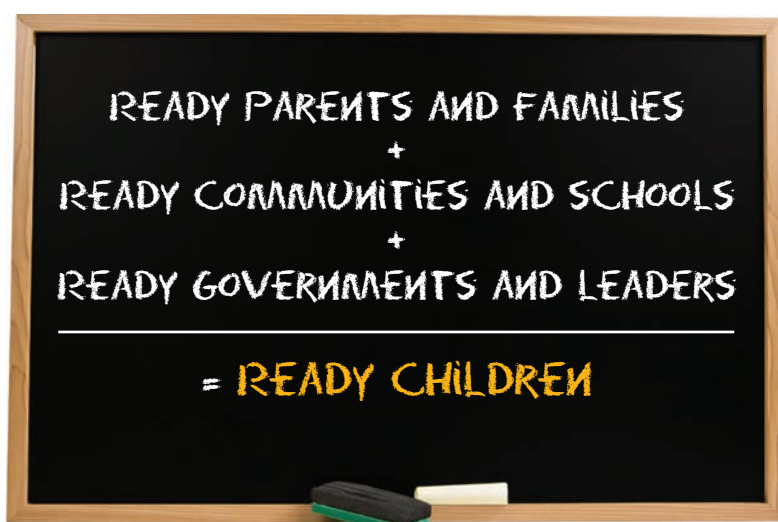
Are We Ready?

Research tells us that children who begin school ready to learn will have future successes in learning throughout their lives. But how do we help children get this best start to school? The answer is what societies have known for generations – it takes a village to raise a child.

Ready parents and families, ready communities and schools and ready governments and leaders, working

together, will promote the best possible outcomes for Manitoba's children.

And through the Early Development Instrument (EDI) – Manitoba's method for measuring the readiness for school of children as they transition from Kindergarten to grade one – we can tell how ready we are in supporting our next generation. For information on Manitoba's EDI results, visit: www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/edi



Are we ready?

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