

## Getting Ready for Kindergarten: Becoming an Attentive Learner

There's a lot going on in kindergarten! Knowing how to follow directions and pay attention in a busy classroom helps children get the most out of school. Let's explore some skills that will help your child be an attentive learner.

These activities support the following Lincoln County Schools kindergarten readiness skills:

- I can follow directions the first time I am told
- I can complete tasks that involve two or more steps.
- I can concentrate on a task and am not easily distracted.
- I can wait.

### Following Directions

In order to follow directions successfully, children need to

- Hear and understand what someone is saying;
- Be comfortable doing what's being asked;
- Know how to ask for help if needed.



Here are some ways to help your child practice following directions:

- Start with simple fun instructions such as "Can you make a silly face?" or "Can you hop like a bunny?"
- Once your child can follow one direction, try more complicated instructions, such as "Can you find a leaf then put it on this rock?" or "Run to the swing set, touch the swing, then go give that tree a hug."
- Give your child directions for doing simple household chores, like helping to set the table or sorting laundry. If the chore is new, you may need to do it with your child.
- Invite your child to help prepare foods, like washing fruit or putting peanut butter on crackers. Try following the directions in a recipe together.

Following directions can be hard and mistakes are part of the learning process. If your child has trouble following directions...

- Make sure your child can see and hear you as you give an instruction.
- Focus on simple (and fun!) instructions until your child gains confidence.
- Don't worry about mistakes. Be encouraging so your child is willing to keep trying. You can say something like, "Oops, that didn't work. Let's try that again."
- If it's a new or difficult skill for your child, provide guidance and support.
  - At first you may need to provide gentle physical guidance. For example, you might walk with your child to go get something or guide your child's hand to pick something up.
  - Gradually provide less physical help. Shift to using words, describing what needs to be done.
  - When your child is ready, give an instruction and then wait to offer help only if needed.

### Something to Remember

Make following directions a positive experience. Recognized your child's efforts by saying things like:

- "You followed my directions! You put your shoes away, hung up your coat, and washed your hands!"
- "You brought me the paper towels like I asked – that's a big help!"
- "Thank you!"

## Learning to Concentrate

It takes practice to concentrate on an activity – especially if there are lots of other children around. Here are some ways to help build your child’s concentration skills.

- Make sure your child gets plenty of exercise. Activities such as playing outside, going for walks, doing exercises or dancing help children release energy and get ready to focus.
- Practice looking and listening.
  - Ask your child to look for specific things when you go for a walk (seagulls, cracks in the sidewalk, bugs) or run errands (items from your grocery list, stop signs, red cars).
  - Play a family listening game. Have everyone close their eyes, be very quiet and listen for sounds. After a minute or so, have everyone open their eyes and share what they heard.
- Play games that encourage children to watch closely and remember. (*Hint: Both of these games are more fun if you let your child take turns hiding things from you!*)
  - Put three identical cups upside down on the floor or table. Let your child watch as you place a small toy under one of the cups. Ask your child to watch the cup the toy is under as you move the cups around. Stop and ask your child to find the toy. Start slowly and then add more cups and/or more moves as your child’s skill grow.
  - Put three to five items on a tray and have your child look at them closely. While your child’s eyes are closed, take one thing away and hide it behind your back. Have your child look at the remaining items and tell you what’s missing.

## Staying Calm and Being Patient

When there are many children in a room, it can be challenging for everyone to stay focused. Help your child learn ways to stay calm and be patient.



- Before starting a new or challenging activity, encourage your child to
  - Slow down and take some deep breaths.
  - Look and listen for directions.
  - Think about what to do first.
  - Know who and when to ask for help.
- Children usually have to wait for things in school. They wait in line to go outside, for their turn to work with the teacher, or for an activity to start. You can help your child learn to wait patiently.
  - Practice keeping hands and feet still when standing or sitting. Make it a game, starting with short periods of time. Can you and your child both hold still while you count to 10? 20? 100?
  - Help your child think of things to do whenever he/she has to wait. Talk about what works best for your child in different situations. Try some ideas together, such as
    - looking for things of a certain color;
    - watching and thinking about what others are doing;
    - drawing pictures;
    - looking at a book.