Department of
Education

GOVERNMENT OF
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Shaping the future

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Starting kindergarten is an exciting and important transition for you and your child! This booklet is designed to help make the start of your child's early learning journey a happy and positive one.

You will find practical tips to help you and your family get ready for kindergarten, plus information about what your child will learn and how you can support them in their learning journey.

AISWA
Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia

CATHOLIC EDUCATION
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

TRIM: D22/0714308
ISBN: 9780730746713

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Western Australia 2022

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In Western Australia, all children can access 15 hours of kindergarten per week (30 hours per fortnight), no matter where they live in the state. Attending kindergarten prepares children for Pre-primary, the first year of full-time school.

Your child must be 4 years old by 30 June the year they start kindergarten – this means some children will start kindergarten aged 3 years old and turn 4 while they're at kindergarten.

Month of your child's birthday

January to June
3 years, turning 4 years old: Start kindergarten

July to December
4 years, turning 5 years old: Start kindergarten

School age calculator

education.wa.edu.au/enrolling-in-school

Before starting

As your child's first teacher, the role you play is vital. Children learn many important things before they start school. Regardless of their ability or developmental stage, your child brings all their existing learning and unique experiences with them when they start kindergarten – at kindergarten, they build on this learning to shape the foundation for their education journey.

The idea of starting kindergarten can be a bit daunting for some parents and families. Your little one is growing up! Kindergarten is a time when your child will have lots of fun with other children and learn many new things that will help them become confident and enthusiastic learners.

Your enthusiasm and encouragement will help your child settle in. Talk to your child about how they are feeling about starting kindergarten – it can be both exciting and a little bit scary. Sharing your own memories of school can help your child feel more confident about starting kindergarten. Even if you had some difficult experiences, share some of your happy memories with your child, like making new friends.

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Getting ready

What your child needs

A bag

A hat

A water bottle

A lunchbox with lunch and some snacks

A change of clothes including socks and underwear

Check with your school or community kindergarten as to what else your child might need.

Meeting the teacher

It is important to get to know your child's teacher. The teacher will be able to talk about what happens during the day and answer any questions you may have about your child starting kindergarten. It is also an opportunity for the teacher to get to know you and learn about what your child knows, and how to best support them.

Many schools hold orientation sessions for families before the school year starts. This is a great opportunity for you to meet the teacher and other families and find out what is planned for the year.

Families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent are supported by Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers in public schools; similar support may be provided in non-government schools. Families can also arrange with the school to use an interpreter when meeting with the teacher.

If required, the school or community kindergarten can arrange for an interpreter at teacher meetings for families who speak English as an additional dialect.

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Daily routines

Getting dressed

Your child may or may not require a uniform. Comfort is key so dress them in practical clothes and sensible shoes. Messy play is part of learning in kindergarten and so expect a bit of dirt, paint or even glue to come home with your child at the end of the day.

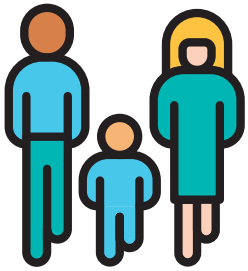
It's a good idea to practise getting dressed before the first day – if your child can get dressed and undressed independently it will make getting ready easier.

Encourage your child to wear a hat when they are outside, as they will be required to wear one when they are playing outside at kindergarten.

Remember to label your child's clothing, lunchbox, hat, bag and shoes. There will be a lost property box at the kindergarten.

Travelling to kindergarten

There are so many ways to get to kindergarten. However you choose to get there, make sure your child is safe.



Walking

- Talk to your child about why they need to hold hands near roads and traffic.
- Model safe pedestrian behaviours by obeying traffic rules, road signs and choose safe places to cross.

Driving

- Always fasten your child's seatbelt securely and make sure they are always wearing an approved child car restraint.
- It is recommended to use the rear passenger door, closest to the kerb and away from traffic – to get your child in and out of the car.

Cycling, towing and scooting

- Make sure everyone is wearing a helmet and enclosed shoes, even if they're in a bike trailer or bike seat.
- Role-model safe cycling behaviour by keeping to the left and using your bell to let people know you are coming.

Check with your school or community kindergarten teacher as to what the drop off and pick up procedures are.

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In kindergarten, children learn through play – their learning builds on what they have learned at home and in other settings.

Learning programs in the early years are shaped by the five outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework and WA Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines:

- children have a strong sense of identity
- children are connected with and contribute to their world
- children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- children are confident and involved learners
- children are effective communicators.

Kindergarten teachers are responsive to children's ideas and play when planning learning activities.

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Your child will experience many different learning activities.

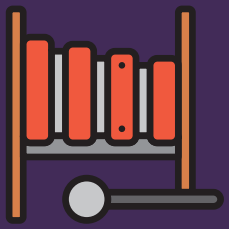
Painting, drawing, cutting and pasting

Puzzles and construction play

Exploring books, listening to stories and storytelling

Talking and listening

Dressing up and imaginative play



Singing, listening to and playing music

Dancing and drama

Climbing, balancing, running and jumping

Using digital technologies

Playing with clay, play dough, sand and water

Opportunities to share with other children and develop independence

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Supporting your child's learning

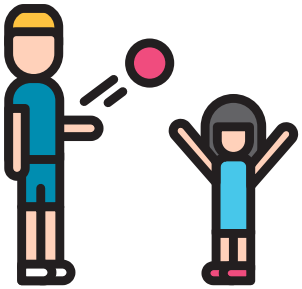
Children learn best when parents, families and teachers work together. You know your child better than anyone – sharing information about your child's interests and abilities with their teacher helps your child get the most out of kindergarten.

Children with developmental delay or disability make up part of the diverse group of students who attend kindergarten programs. Collaboration between staff, families and other agencies (such as therapy providers) may be beneficial, as children with developmental delay or disability require additional planning and support.

Many kindergartens provide opportunities for parents and carers to volunteer as helpers. Volunteering provides you with a deeper understanding of your child's experience at kindergarten and an opportunity to meet other parents. Some kindergartens also encourage parents to connect with each other online, for example via social media or an app.

There are many ways to support your child at kindergarten.

Talk with your child each day about what they did – this helps make connections between home and school and shows that you are interested in them and what they do.



Playing outside, for example at playgrounds, helps your child grow stronger and confident and uses the part of the brain that helps them concentrate and problem solve.

Reading books together helps your child learn that written words have meaning and can give lots of enjoyment. This helps them learn about reading and writing.

Singing songs, making music and dancing helps your child to develop their memory and express their feelings.

Building things – with toys, sand, cardboard, natural materials – helps your child develop their fine motor skills, be creative and problem solve.

Imaginative play, such as playing shop, helps your child learn to get on with others, share and take turns. They also practise speaking and simple mathematics such as counting and sorting.

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Staying healthy

A healthy body helps your child be their best self, each and every day.

Sleep

Make sure your child is getting enough sleep. Have a regular wind down routine and time for bed.

Breakfast

Having a nutritious breakfast sets your child up for the day – it's hard for children to learn on an empty tummy.

Lunchbox

Pack a lunchbox of healthy food that you know your child will like and eat. Help your child learn how to unwrap their food and eat it independently.

Immunisation

Your child's immunisation schedule needs to be up to date (appropriate to their age and any limiting medical conditions) for them to go to kindergarten. Speak with the school or community kindergarten teacher if you do not have these records and they can assist you.

Toilet training

Help your child manage going to the toilet on their own by giving them lots of practise to undo, pull down and do up their clothes, use toilet paper, flush the toilet and wash their hands all by themselves.

Medical

If your child has any allergies/medical requirements, you must let the teacher know so that a plan can be put in place to manage them.

Children will begin school with varying levels of self-care skills. Build upon your child's existing skills to promote independence and participation.

We all want our children to stay healthy and well so they can learn to the best of their ability.

If your child is sick, it's important to keep them at home or arrange alternative care for them for everyone's safety.

If you do keep your child at home due to illness, you will need to let the kindergarten know by phone, text message or email.

If your child becomes ill during the day, the kindergarten will contact you and ask that you take your child home. For this reason, it's important that you keep your child's emergency contact details up to date with their kindergarten.

For more information about your child's health visit WA Health or see your child's doctor.
HealthyWA.wa.gov.au

Your child's year

Going every day is important

Going to kindergarten regularly helps your child build on what they are learning each day. Developing the habit of going to school regularly is vital so your child does not miss out on important ideas and skills they need for future learning. Missing kindergarten days means your child misses out on learning and activities with their friends.

You can help by:

- talking positively about kindergarten so your child is happy to go each day
- setting play dates to help your child develop friendships
- arriving at and collecting your child from school on time
- where possible, making appointments with doctors, dentists and specialists after school or during the school holidays
- taking family holidays during the school holidays and not during the school term.

Talk with your child's teacher or school principal if your child is reluctant to go to kindergarten.

Care for your child outside kindergarten hours

Children usually finish their kindergarten day by 3pm, however times will vary.

If you require care for your child before or after kindergarten, you may be able to access Outside School Hours Care (OSHC). Your school/community kindergarten will have details about OSHC in the area.

Parenting support

Children thrive when they are raised in a nurturing environment. Triple P – Positive Parenting Program gives all parents simple, practical strategies to help raise a happy and confident child.

5 steps to positive parenting

1. Create a safe, interesting environment
2. Have a positive learning environment
3. Use assertive discipline
4. Have realistic expectations
5. Take care of yourself as a parent

Ask your school about registering for a free Triple P seminar or find out more at: triplep-parenting.net.au/wa.

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Find the right person to answer your questions

If you have a question about your child's experience of kindergarten, start by asking your child's teacher. School principals can also address questions or concerns you may have about the kindergarten program, your child or staff.

All children, regardless of their ability or developmental stage have unique strengths, interests and capacity to learn. As parents and carers, you know your child better than anyone, and sharing your knowledge of your child's strengths and needs will assist in setting the conditions for your child to successfully participate in kindergarten.

The cultural and language backgrounds of children and their families are valued and respected. Proficiency in the first language supports general learning and the learning of another language or dialect therefore it is important to maintain the home language. If your child speaks another language other than English at home, it is important to inform the teacher so that their learning needs are met.

If you speak another language and are not proficient in English, ask your child's teacher about using an interpreter when meeting to discuss their progress, to ask questions or share concerns you may have. Most schools provide a range of documents translated into different languages – check your school's website or ask at your school/community kindergarten.

Useful websites

Department of Education WA
education.wa.edu.au

AISWA – Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
ais.wa.edu.au

CEWA – Catholic Education WA
cewa.edu.au

Community Kindergartens
communitykindys.org.au

HealthyWA – Childhood immunisation schedule
healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Childhood-immunisation-schedule

Triple P – Positive Parenting Program
triplep-parenting.net.au/au-uken/find-help/triple-p-parenting-in-western-australia

Child and Adolescent Health Service
cahs.health.wa.gov.au

Raising Children Network
raisingchildren.net.au

Reimagine Australia (support for children with development delay or disability)
reimagine.org.au

Early Years Learning Framework
acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf

Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines
k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/media/documents/outline_downloads/Western-Australian-Kindergarten-Curriculum-Guidelines-pdf.pdf

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