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# PARENTS' GUIDE TO Student Success

## KINDERGARTEN

This guide provides an overview of what your child will learn by the end of kindergarten in mathematics and English language arts/literacy. It focuses on the key skills your child will learn in these subjects, which will build a strong foundation for success in the other subjects he or she studies throughout the school year. This guide is based on the new Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted by more than 40 states. These K–12 standards are informed by the highest state standards from across the country. If your child is meeting the expectations outlined in these standards, he or she will be well prepared for 1st grade.

### WHY ARE ACADEMIC STANDARDS IMPORTANT?

Academic standards are important because they help ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in college and the workforce. They help set clear and consistent expectations for students, parents, and teachers; build your child's knowledge and skills; and help set high goals for all students.

Of course, high standards are not the only thing needed for our children's success. But standards provide an important first step — a clear roadmap for learning for teachers, parents, and students. Having clearly defined goals helps families and teachers work together to ensure that students succeed. Standards help parents and teachers know when students need extra assistance or when they need to be challenged even more. They also will help your child develop critical thinking skills that will prepare him or her for college and career.

### HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD?

You should use this guide to help build a relationship with your child's teacher. You can do this by talking to his or her teacher regularly about how your child is doing — beyond parent-teacher conferences.

At home, you can play an important role in setting high expectations and supporting your child in meeting them. If your child needs a little extra help or wants to learn more about a subject, work with his or her teacher to identify opportunities for tutoring, to get involved in clubs after school, or to find other resources.

### THIS GUIDE INCLUDES

- An overview of some of the key things your child will learn in English/literacy and math in kindergarten
- Ideas for activities to help your child learn at home
- Topics of discussion for talking to your child's teacher about his or her academic progress

# English Language Arts & Literacy

Learning new language skills is a hallmark of kindergarten. Your child will learn about the alphabet and its role in reading. Your child will practice rhyming, matching words with beginning sounds, and blending sounds into words. Practice with these types of activities is a powerful step toward learning to read and spell correctly. The size of your child's vocabulary is another key factor in his or her ability to read and comprehend books and stories. Your child also will begin to experiment with writing and will be encouraged to use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing letters to share information, ideas, and feelings.

## A Sample of What Your Child Will Be Working on in Kindergarten

- Naming upper- and lower-case letters, matching those letters with their sounds, and printing them
- Comparing the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories, such as fairy tales and folktales
- Retelling familiar stories and talking about stories read to them using details from the text
- Using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to describe an event, including his or her reaction to what happened
- Stating an opinion or preference about a topic or book in writing (e.g., "My favorite book is . . .")
- Taking part in classroom conversations and following rules for discussions (e.g., learning to listen to others and taking turns when speaking)
- Speaking clearly to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas, including descriptions of familiar people, places, things, and events
- Asking and answering questions about key details in stories or other information read aloud
- Understanding and using question words (e.g., *who, what, where, when, why, how*) in discussions
- Learning to recognize, spell, and properly use those little grammatical words that hold the language together (e.g., *a, the, to, of, from, I, is, are*)

### Talking to Your Child's Teacher

#### Keeping the conversation focused.

When you talk to the teacher, do not worry about covering everything. Instead, keep the conversation focused on the most important topics. In kindergarten, these include:

- Using knowledge of letters and letter-sound correspondences to figure out how to spell words as they sound
- Reading and understanding a story designed for early readers

Ask to see a sample of your child's work. Ask the teacher questions such as: Is this piece of work satisfactory? How could it be better? Is my child on track? How can I help my child improve or excel in this area? If my child needs extra support or wants to learn more about a subject, are there resources to help his or her learning outside the classroom?

# Mathematics

Young children arrive in kindergarten with widely varying knowledge in math. By the end of the year, your child must have some important foundations in place. One of the most important skills your child should develop is the ability to add and subtract small numbers and use addition and subtraction to solve word problems. This will rely on gaining some fundamentals early in the year, such as counting objects to tell how many there are. Addition and subtraction will continue to be a very strong focus in math through 2nd grade.

## A Sample of What Your Child Will Be Working on in Kindergarten

- Counting objects to tell how many there are
- Comparing two groups of objects to tell which group, if either, has more; comparing two written numbers to tell which is greater
- Acting out addition and subtraction word problems and drawing diagrams to represent them
- Adding with a sum of 10 or less; subtracting from a number 10 or less; and solving addition and subtraction word problems
- Adding and subtracting very small numbers quickly and accurately (e.g.,  $3 + 1$ )
- Correctly naming shapes regardless of orientation or size (e.g., a square oriented as a “diamond” is still a square)

### Keeping the conversation focused.

When you talk to the teacher, do not worry about covering everything. Instead, keep the conversation focused on the most important topics. In kindergarten, these include:

- Counting to tell the number of objects (this will not be written work; ask the teacher for his or her observations of your child’s progress in this area)
- Solving addition and subtraction word problems

Ask to see a sample of your child’s work. Ask the teacher questions such as: Is this piece of work satisfactory? How could it be better? Is my child on track? How can I help my child improve or excel in this area? If my child needs extra support or wants to learn more about a subject, are there resources to help his or her learning outside the classroom?



Talking to  
Your Child’s  
Teacher

# Help Your Child Learn at Home

Learning does not end in the classroom. Children need help and support at home to succeed in their studies. Try to create a quiet place for your child to study, and carve out time *every day* when your child can concentrate on reading, writing, and math uninterrupted by friends, brothers or sisters, or other distractions.

You should also try and sit down with your child at least once a week for 15 to 30 minutes while he or she works on homework. This will keep you informed about what your child is working on, and it will help you be the first to know if your child needs help with specific topics. By taking these small steps, you will be helping your child become successful both in and outside the classroom.

Additionally, here are some activities you can do with your child to support learning at home:

## English Language Arts & Literacy

- Read with your child every day, books like *Are You My Mother* by P.D. Eastman or *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss. Ask your child to explain his or her favorite parts of the story. Share your own ideas. To find more books for your child to read, visit [www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix\\_B.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf).
- Encourage your child to tell you about his or her day at school. Keep paper, markers, or crayons around the house for your child to write letters or words or draw a picture about his or her day. Have your child describe the picture to you.
- Play word games like *I Spy*, sing songs like *Itsy Bitsy Spider*, and make silly rhymes together.

## Mathematics

Look for “word problems” in real life. Some kindergarten examples might include:

- Play “Write the next number.” You write a number, and your child writes the next number.
- Ask your child questions that require counting as many as 20 things. For example, ask, “How many books do you have about wild animals?”
- Ask your child questions that require comparing numbers. “Who is wearing more bracelets, you or your sister?” (Your child might use matching or counting to find the answer.)

For more information, the full standards are available at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

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**PTA**<sup>®</sup>  
*everychild.onevoice.*<sup>®</sup>

**National PTA**  
1250 N Pitt Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Toll-Free: (800) 307-4PTA (4782)  
PTA.org • [info@pta.org](mailto:info@pta.org)



# parent ROADMAP

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD IN KINDERGARTEN  
**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**





*America's schools  
are working  
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quality instruction  
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The way we taught students in the past simply does not prepare them for the higher demands of college and careers today and in the future. Your school and schools throughout the country are working to improve teaching and learning to ensure that all children will graduate high school with the skills they need to be successful.

In English language arts and literacy, this means three major changes. Students will continue reading and writing. But in addition to stories and literature, they will read more texts that provide facts and background knowledge in areas including science and social studies. They will read more challenging texts and be asked more questions that will require them to refer back to what they have read. There will also be an increased emphasis on building a strong vocabulary so that students can read and understand challenging material.

## What your child will be learning in kindergarten English language arts and literacy



In kindergarten, students will learn the alphabet and the basic features of letters and words. They will break down spoken and written words into syllables and letters and identify the sounds each letter makes. These important skills will enable your child to learn new words and to read and understand simple books and stories. Students will also learn to write and share information in a variety of ways, including drawing, writing letters and words, listening to others, and speaking aloud. Activities in these areas will include:

- Naming and writing upper- and lowercase letters
- Matching letters to sounds and using other methods to figure out unfamiliar words when reading and writing
- Learning and using new words
- Identifying words that rhyme
- Reading common words such as *the*, *of*, *you*, *are*, *she*, and *my*
- Asking and answering questions about a story the teacher reads out loud
- Identifying characters, settings, and major events in a story
- Recognizing the person, place, thing, or idea that an illustration shows
- Participating in discussions by listening and taking turns speaking
- Using a combination of drawing, speaking, and writing to describe an event, give information about a topic, or share an opinion
- Taking part in shared reading, writing, and research projects
- Expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly

## Partnering with your child's teacher

Don't be afraid to reach out to your child's teacher—you are an important part of your child's education. Ask to see a sample of your child's work or bring a sample with you. Ask the teacher questions like:

- Is my child learning to read and write?
- What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?
- What can I do at home to make sure that my child is successful?

*In kindergarten, students will read stories and poems. Additionally, they will read to learn information about history, the world, science, and other areas. Here are just a few examples of how your child will develop important reading skills across grade levels.*

## READING LITERATURE

### Kindergarten Reading

- With help from the teacher, students retell stories, including key details.
- With help from the teacher, students name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

### Grade One Reading

- Students retell stories, including key details, and show that they understand the lesson or moral of a story.
- Students identify who is telling the story at various points in a text.

### Grade Two Reading

- Students retell stories and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
- Students acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

## READING FOR INFORMATION

### Kindergarten Reading

- With help from the teacher, students ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- With help from the teacher, students identify what person, place, thing, or idea a picture shows.

### Grade One Reading

- Students ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- Students use the illustrations and details in a text to describe key ideas.

### Grade Two Reading

- Students ask and answer such questions as *who, what, where, when, why, and how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
- Students explain how specific images or illustrations (such as a diagram of how a machine works) are useful.



*Students will read more challenging texts and materials as they progress through grade levels.*



*Writing tasks in kindergarten may include short compositions that tell a story, share an opinion, or present information. Here are just a few examples of how your child will develop important writing skills across grade levels.*

### **Kindergarten Writing**

- Using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing, students name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

### **Grade One Writing**

- Students name a topic and supply some facts about the topic.
- Students provide some sense of closure.

### **Grade Two Writing**

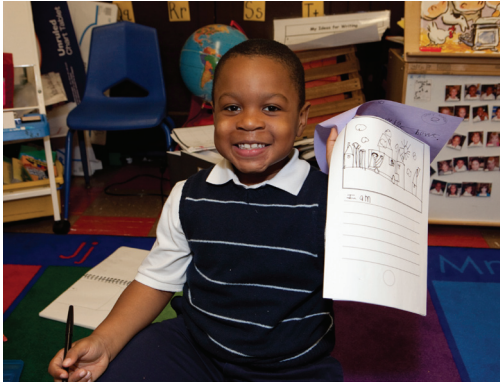
- Students introduce a topic and use facts and definitions to develop points.
- Students provide a concluding statement or section.



*Some writing guidelines may seem similar from year to year. However, with practice at each grade level, students continue to learn and apply the rules of standard written English and to strengthen and expand their vocabulary, use of language, and organization of ideas.*



## Helping your child learn outside of school



1. Read to your child and have him or her read to you every day for at least 15 minutes. Pick out words that might be new to your child or words that have multiple or complex meanings. Discuss those words and how they add to what the writer is saying.
2. Ask your child to retell a story in his or her own words by telling what happened first, second, third, etc.
3. Ask your child to think about what the message of a story may be or what he or she learned from an informational book or article.
4. Look for opportunities in everyday places to build your child's vocabulary.
5. Be sure your child has a library card. Children should select books in which they are interested to develop a passion for reading. Many libraries have book clubs and family activities that make reading fun for the entire family.
6. Use technology to help build your child's interest in reading. There are several websites where students can read books or articles online. The computer will help with words the student cannot read independently. Libraries also have computers students can use to access those sites. Feel free to ask a librarian or teacher for suggestions.

## Additional Resources



For more information on the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and literacy, go to <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/key-points-in-english-language-arts> or <http://www.commoncoreworks.org>.

For more information on helping your child become a reader, go to <http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/reader/index.html>.



# parent **ROADMAP**

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD IN KINDERGARTEN  
**MATHEMATICS**





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*America's schools  
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The way we taught students in the past simply does not prepare them for the higher demands of college and careers today and in the future. Your school and schools throughout the country are working to improve teaching and learning to ensure that all children will graduate high school with the skills they need to be successful.

In mathematics, this means three major changes. Teachers will concentrate on teaching a more focused set of major math concepts and skills. This will allow students time to master key math concepts and skills in a more organized way throughout the year and from one grade to the next. It will also call for teachers to use rich and challenging math content and to engage students in solving real-world problems in order to inspire greater interest in mathematics.

## *What your child will be learning in kindergarten mathematics*

In kindergarten, your child will focus primarily on two important areas. The first is learning numbers and what numbers represent. The second is addition and subtraction. Students will also learn to identify and work with shapes. Activities in these areas include:

- Counting how many objects are in a group and comparing the quantities of two groups of objects
- Comparing two numbers to identify which is greater or less than the other
- Understanding addition as putting together and subtraction as taking away from
- Adding and subtracting very small numbers quickly and accurately
- Breaking up numbers less than or equal to 10 in more than one way (for example,  $9=6+3$ ,  $9=5+4$ )
- For any number from 1 to 9, finding the missing quantity that is needed to reach 10
- Representing addition and subtraction word problems using objects or by drawing pictures
- Solving addition and subtraction word problems involving numbers that add up to 10 or less or by subtracting from a number 10 or less



## *Partnering with your child's teacher*

Don't be afraid to reach out to your child's teacher—you are an important part of your child's education. Ask to see a sample of your child's work or bring a sample with you. Ask the teacher questions like:

- Is my child at the level where he/she should be at this point of the school year?
- Where is my child excelling?
- What do you think is giving my child the most trouble? How can I help my child improve in this area?
- What can I do to help my child with upcoming work?

Here are just a few examples of the skills and strategies students will develop as they solve word problems in kindergarten.

### Kindergarten Mathematics

- Represent addition and subtraction with objects, fingers, mental images, drawings, sounds (such as claps), acting out situations, verbal explanations, expressions, and equations
- Solve word problems by adding or subtracting numbers up through 10 using objects and drawings



### Grade One Mathematics

- Solve word problems by adding or subtracting numbers up through 20
- Solve addition and subtraction problems for different unknown numbers ( $20 - ? = 15$ ,  $9 + 4 = ?$ )

### Grade Two Mathematics

- Solve one- and two-step word problems by adding or subtracting numbers up through 100

### Examples of Kindergarten Word Problems

|                                                                                                           |                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br><b>Addition</b>    | Three red apples and three green apples are on the table. How many apples are on the table? |
| <br><b>Subtraction</b> | Mom has ten apples. She gives one to Mary Ann. How many apples are left?                    |

In kindergarten your child will use a variety of pictures and models to understand and solve addition and subtraction problems.



Here are just a few examples of how students will work with numbers and learn to think of ten as a unit—important building blocks for understanding place value.

### Kindergarten Mathematics

- Count to 100 by ones and tens
- Understand that numbers from 11 to 19 contain a ten and some leftover ones (for example,  $14=10+4$ )

### Grade One Mathematics

- Understand that 10 can be thought of as a bundle of ten ones—called a “ten”
- Understand that the two digits of a two-digit number represent amounts of tens and ones (place value)
- Add and subtract numbers through 100 using what students have learned about place value

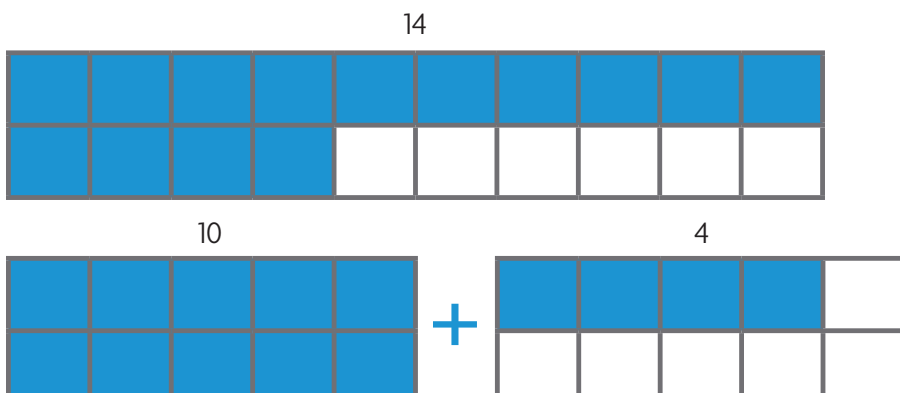
### Grade Two Mathematics

- Understand that 100 can be thought of as a bundle of ten tens—called a “hundred”
- Understand that the three digits of a three-digit number represent amounts of hundreds, tens, and ones (place value)
- Add and subtract numbers through 1000 using what students have learned about place value

*Your child will learn to find the “partners” that make ten for any number. This drawing shows that if you have 8, it takes 2 more to make 10.*



*From there, students learn to think of ten as a unit and to break all the teen numbers down to a ten and some leftover ones.*



## Helping your child learn outside of school



1. Use everyday objects to allow your child to count and group a collection of objects.
2. Encourage your child to construct numbers in multiple ways. For example, what are some ways that you can make 10? Answers might include  $5+5$ ,  $6+4$ ,  $8+2$ , etc. Have your child explain his or her thinking.
3. Have your child create story problems to represent addition and subtraction of small numbers. For example, “Ann had eight balloons. Then she gave three away, so she only had five left.”
4. Encourage your child to stick with it whenever a problem seems difficult. This will help your child see that **everyone** can learn math.
5. Praise your child when he or she makes an effort and share in the excitement when he or she solves a problem or understands something for the first time.

## Additional Resources



For more information on the Common Core State Standards for mathematics, go to <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/key-points-in-mathematics> or visit <http://www.commoncoreworks.org>.

For more information on helping your child learn mathematics (with activities from pre-school to grade five), go to <http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/math/index.html>.