

Parent Guide

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Subject Guides

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Supporting Learning



What is this resource and how do I use it?

A quick guide to help you and your child feel more prepared and confident in starting nursery. With practical tips and advice from the perspective of both a parent of a nursery-aged child and experienced early years teacher, it includes things that have proved successful for helping other parents and children settle into nursery life.

What is the focus of this resource?

Starting Nursery

Organisation

Preparation

Wellbeing

Further Ideas and Suggestions

Visit our **Starting Nursery or School** category and explore more helpful advice and fun resources that could help you and your child get ready for starting nursery. You might also find the **Home Routines and Organisation Tools** area useful for practical ideas and tools to support your family.

Parents Blog



Parenting Wiki



Parenting Podcast



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Parents Hub

Starting Nursery

Top Tips and Advice for Parents

Starting nursery can feel like a big step for both you and your child - whether they are three months or three years old. This guide provides our 10 top tips to help ease the transition for the whole family.

- 1 Know the nursery** - do you agree with their ethos? Do you get a good feeling when you are there or when talking to staff? This is important and, whilst you might be somewhat limited in choice due to places or location, you should try to find a nursery where you feel comfortable.
- 2 Say hello to nursery** - as you drive or walk past (manufacture this if you have to). Talk to your child about the fact that they will be going there soon to have lots of fun with other children. Wonder aloud what toys and games they might play with at nursery and offer some suggestions based on your own experience - 'I liked painting when I went to nursery'. This helps your child recognise the actual building they are going to go to as well as giving them an idea of what 'nursery' actually means.
- 3 Take the nursery up on visits** - often, children are invited into nurseries for visits prior to officially starting. Usually, parents are invited to do a 'stay and play' with their child and it is a great chance for you, your child and their teacher or key worker to get to know each other. It can also help with getting a feel for the place and, hopefully, help your child feel better about starting too.
- 4 Don't feel silly** - feel free to ask questions whenever you need to. Your child's teacher or key worker will probably be very willing to help - and they are used to being asked questions! It is normal for parents and children to ask them lots of questions on a daily basis. They can also be grateful for a little insight into your child - knowing that they struggle with change or are scared of loud noises will help the teacher work with your child and give them the best support they can.
- 5 Have spare clothes at the ready** - even if your child is completely dry day and night or doesn't like getting involved in messy play usually, always have a spare set of clothes (including underwear and socks) in a bag. Children are full of surprises! Some nurseries are happy for bags to live on your child's peg until you want or need to take it home, others might like you to take it home everyday, particularly if they put letters and such in for you to read.
- 6 Keep smiling** - your child might struggle at drop-off times and you might too! Staying calm and putting on your brave face can really help your child adjust to this change - if they see you are upset or worried, they will feel this too. Staff in nurseries are used to children being upset when leaving their adults and will have lots of ways to distract, comfort and reassure your child. Keep going and you will get to a day where your child skips into nursery and forgets to say bye to you because they're so happy and settled there - sometimes this can feel hard too!
- 7 Encourage independence** - at an appropriate level. If your child is going to start nursery at three years old, work on things such as putting their coat on independently, putting their shoes and bag away and going to the toilet by themselves as much as possible. Once they are at nursery, they are likely to be expected to tidy up, find their belongings, put them away and follow some school rules. Starting similar tasks at home can help them hugely.

Starting Nursery

Top Tips and Advice for Parents

- 8** **Expect to get ill** - of course, you and your child's teachers or key workers will be talking to them about the need to wash their hands, use tissues for sneezing and so on... but your child will pick up germs and bugs at nursery. They will likely also pass these to you, unfortunately.
- 9** **Routines are key** - routines can help your child stay healthy (getting enough sleep, eating a variety of foods at mealtimes, brushing their teeth) but also often help them feel settled and prepared. For example, if they know that your morning routine goes: breakfast, brush teeth, get dressed, play, toilet, walk to nursery, they will know what is coming next. Without it, it can feel like they are suddenly being uprooted from their game or activity and they are not always sure why!
- 10** **Feed the snack monsters** - even if you usually don't encourage snacking, you might find you have a 'hangry' child on your hands if you don't! They will be doing a lot at nursery, despite probably telling you they can't remember what they did. They also might not eat much or anything during snacktime (or lunchtime, depending on what their day looks like). Offering a small snack on the way home from nursery can give them some much-needed energy and keep them feeling happy. Apples, malt loaf or bananas are all great options for post-nursery fuel.

Remember that your child is likely to mirror you and your approaches to most things in life - if you can make starting nursery seem relatable, enjoyable and doable for your child, they are much more likely to settle quickly and even want to go! If they like new things, make it seem like an adventure. If they are a little unsure of change, talk about nursery in a matter-of-fact way so it's not too daunting for them. You know your child best.