

Parenting NEWS & VIEWS

EARLY LEARNING AND
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

School Readiness

The term *school readiness* is used by educators, legislatures, and parents, but what does it really mean? As a parent, you want your child to be prepared for school and successful once they enter, but if every child is unique and develops at their own pace and in their own time, how do you know when they are ready? There are certain skills your child is expected to master before they start Kindergarten, and with support from parents, family members, and caregivers, children can be ready for school.

Children need a variety of experiences to prepare them for Kindergarten. Most people know that children need to practice academic skills like language and literacy, mathematics, creative arts, science, and social studies, but being ready for school is much more than academics. Children need to develop

core skills such as resilience, self-regulation, wellbeing, social skills, and critical thinking.

Make sure children get a good start to their day and are ready to learn. They need a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

It's hard for children to focus and actively engage in learning when they are tired, hungry, experiencing stress, or ill.

Your child needs to be physically, mentally, and emotionally ready to learn. Encourage healthy food choices and make time for outside play or a family walk after dinner.

Encourage children to play with others. This practical experience is the best way for children to build social skills. They learn to take turns in conversations, speak politely, resolve conflicts, and practice manners by being with others.

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OUTDOOR FUN

Many parks, beaches, and wilderness areas offer special activities during the summer, such as craft camps, junior ranger programs, camping, nature hikes, games, wildlife exhibits, boating, swimming, surfing, horseback riding, visiting historic sites, and more. Find outdoor areas and activities near you by using an interactive map at <https://discovertheforest.org>.

Check park websites for alerts, rules, costs, hours, and parking information before visiting. Take a backpack with sunscreen, snacks, water, sweaters, a first aid kit, and any other supplies you may need. If you are concerned about taking your children to wilderness areas alone, you might consider starting a family nature club in your area using a free toolkit from the Children and Nature Network website at <https://www.childrenandnature.org/resources/family-nature-club-toolkit>.



Practicing Self-Regulation Skills

Self-regulation is the ability to control impulses and behavior, focus, identify emotions, and respond appropriately to people and situations. Children with good self-regulation skills can manage their own behavior and are more likely to succeed in school. Self-regulation is an ability that grows over time. It is shaped by life experiences, relationships, and knowledge learned from infancy throughout our lives.

When adults respond to infants quickly and follow predictable routines, infants learn they can trust that person, and they are more likely to stay calm while waiting. Teaching children about emotions and how to express their feelings is the next step in building self-regulation. Label emotions and role model how to manage them appropriately. For example, adults can teach children a deep breathing technique they can use to calm themselves when they feel angry, frustrated, or scared. One strategy for teaching children to breathe in



through their nose and out through their mouth is to pretend there is a bowl of soup. Children can cup their hands and pretend to smell the soup, and then blow on their hands to cool the soup.

By the time children are ready for kindergarten, their experiences have taught them how to regulate much of their own behavior. This can be seen in their ability to share materials, take turns, and work cooperatively on a group project. Adults can continue to support self-regulation skills by role modeling strategies for handling conflicts and providing activities that strengthen children's self-control and positive communication.

Games like Red Light, Green Light or Simon Says promote self-control because they involve children having to stop and start their bodies. Playing music that requires children to listen and respond, like in the song Bingo, also offers practice in self-regulation. Encourage children to participate in turn-taking activities that give them practice in waiting, such as blowing bubbles, obstacle courses, hopscotch, hand clapping games, and games that involve passing a ball. By encouraging good self-regulation skills, you help build the foundation for positive behavior.

Source: *Games and Activities that Build Self-Regulation Skills*, blog by Children's Home Society of California (February 2023).

RECIPE Summer Quinoa Salad

Quinoa is an ancient grain that is packed with protein. Invite children to help prepare this healthy salad for lunch.

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 cup quinoa, uncooked
- 1 red bell pepper
- 1 yellow bell pepper
- 1 red onion
- 2 carrots
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes
- 1 1/2 teaspoons curry powder
- 1/4 cup cilantro
- 1 lime
- 1/4 cup sliced almonds
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

Boil the water in a saucepan and add the quinoa. Cover it with a lid, turn the heat down to low, and let it simmer until all the water is absorbed (15-20 minutes). Pour it into a mixing bowl and chill it in the refrigerator. Chop the vegetables into bite-sized pieces and add them to the quinoa. Add the curry powder, cilantro, sliced almonds, cranberries, juice from the lime, salt, and pepper to the bowl. Mix everything thoroughly and chill before serving.





Summer Safety Tips

Outside play allows children to develop their muscles, balance, strength, and dexterity. It also provides them with fresh air, new learning opportunities, improved vision, a chance to be curious, and a positive attitude. To get the most enjoyment out of summer fun, use the following tips to keep children happy, healthy, and safe.

Car Safety

Use appropriate car seats and restraints when transporting children. Do not leave animals or children unattended in a vehicle. Within ten minutes, the heat inside your car can increase to twenty degrees hotter than outside, and severe heat exposure can result in serious illness or death. Always check the backseat area of the car before leaving.

Water Safety

Drowning can occur whenever there is enough water to cover the nose and mouth. Closely supervise children whenever you are near water, use flotation devices in pools, enroll children in swimming classes, designate a specific person as the “Water Watcher,” and keep pools inaccessible when not in use.

Sunscreen

Make sure children six months and older wear sunscreen when spending time outdoors. Sunscreen should be reapplied throughout the day. Consult your pediatrician before using sunscreen on infants or children with skin rashes. Encourage children to wear hats and sunglasses to protect their head, scalp, ears, face, and eyes.

Insect Repellent

Mosquitos and ticks can carry harmful viruses and diseases. If you are visiting a wilderness area or allowing children to play in tall grass, protect them from harmful bites and stings by using an effective insect repellent.

Inspect Outdoor Play Areas

Prevent injuries by doing safety checks of playgrounds and outdoor areas before children begin playing. Look for hazards such as sharp objects, broken glass, stray animals, and strangers. Teach children that there may be times when there is an emergency, and you need them to come to you immediately. Develop an emergency procedure such as blowing a whistle or calling out a special code word.

Create an Emergency Kit

Be prepared! Put together emergency first aid kits for your home and vehicle. You can include basic medical supplies such as bandages and antibiotic cream, a bee sting kit, bottled water, and snack bars. Consider taking a first aid or CPR class from your local American Red Cross or American Heart Association trainer.

Discover more detailed information about staying safe during the summer by visiting the KidsHealth® summer safety website at <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/center/summer-center.html#catoutdoor>.

These interactions with friends and adults teach children how to navigate through social situations and develop healthy relationships. Throughout their lives, children will encounter various challenges and changes. The friendships they build can offer support during these difficult times. Knowing they have people in their lives who care about them can help children develop resilience.

The quality of resilience allows a child to persevere and continue trying when confronted with obstacles, such as a difficult math problem on a homework assignment or experiencing bullying. Resilient children are confident about their abilities, feel they have a strong support system, have high expectations for themselves, and have a well-developed sense of humor. Providing a loving environment where children can gain confidence in their abilities will equip them with the resilience they will need to be happy and successful.

Most self-regulation skills are learned during social situations. Give children opportunities to play together so they can learn to wait for a turn, negotiate, and resolve conflicts

independently. Support children’s ability to negotiate by helping them label their emotions and learn techniques for calming themselves down when they are upset. Allow children to do as much for themselves as they can so that they take pride in being independent. Give children support when they are frustrated, and praise their efforts. Some self-help skills children entering kindergarten are expected to have include taking care of toileting needs, feeding themselves, washing hands, tying shoes, and being responsible for personal items.

Children learn best when using critical thinking skills to discover information independently. Give children time to observe, predict, and experiment when they play. During play, engage children in critical thinking by asking questions like “What do you think will happen next?” or “How did you do that?” A child who has had the opportunity to practice basic academic skills, develop social skills, and build their resilience will be able to look at starting a new school as an exciting challenge; a chance to learn more, grow, and succeed.

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume I* by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2010).

ABOUT CHS

For over 130 years, Children’s Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community’s children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

At CHS, we view a child not in isolation, but in the context of each family’s health, stability, and resources. We believe that families are fundamentally strong and resilient. The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

Therefore, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, education and resource services, and child care assistance.

CHS also serves as an expert resource for child care providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. To learn more about CHS and resources available to you, please visit our website at www.chs-ca.org.

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