

# A GUIDE TO *School Readiness*

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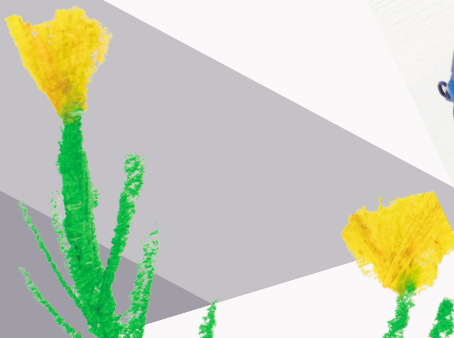
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# START-SMART

## FOCUS AREA CHECKLIST

- ☐ UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL READINESS
- ☐ BUILDING DAILY ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS
- ☐ EMOTIONAL REGULATION & SEPARATION ANXIETY
- ☐ SOCIAL & PLAY SKILLS
- ☐ FINE & GROSS MOTOR SKILLS FOR SCHOOL TASKS
- ☐ COMMUNICATION & SELF-ADVOCACY





## “Being Ready” vs. Helping the School Be Ready

**We often hear the question: “Is my child ready for school?” but that puts all the pressure on the child to meet a fixed standard. In reality, school readiness is a two-way street.**

A common misconception is that children must reach a certain level of maturity, learning, or behaviour before they can succeed in school.

If a child struggles with transitions or language, it's seen as a delay or problem.  
But this isn't true.

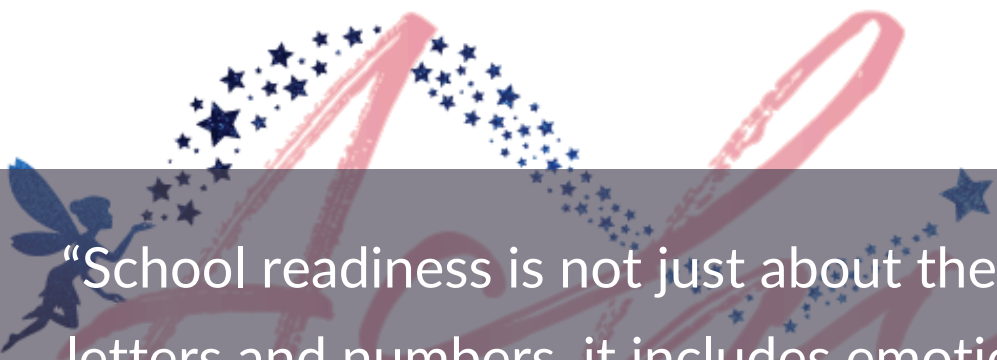
The reality is that every child is unique and brings their own strengths, challenges, and learning styles.

Instead of asking “Is the child ready for school?” we should ask “Is the school ready to meet this child where they are?”

This idea reflects a universal design for learning (UDL) approach: making classrooms more adaptable and responsive so that all children can access education, regardless of sensory needs, language barriers, or motor challenges.

Reference:

— Graue, M. Elizabeth. (1992). “Social Interpretations of Readiness for Kindergarten.”



“School readiness is not just about the child’s ability to learn letters and numbers, it includes emotional well-being, social competence, and motor skills.” – Snow, C. E. (2007). School readiness and the transition to kindergarten.

WHAT DAILY TASKS CAN YOUR CHILD DO INDEPENDENTLY AT HOME, AND HOW MIGHT THESE RELATE TO LIFE AT SCHOOL?

PURPOSE: HELPS PARENTS CONNECT SKILLS LIKE DRESSING, FOLLOWING ROUTINES, OR TIDYING UP TO INDEPENDENCE AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING IN THE CLASSROOM.

HOW DOES YOUR CHILD COPE WITH CHANGES, FRUSTRATION, OR BEING TOLD ‘NO’, AND WHAT HELPS THEM MANAGE THOSE MOMENTS?

PURPOSE: ENCOURAGES PARENTS TO THINK ABOUT EMOTIONAL REGULATION, FLEXIBILITY, AND RESILIENCE, WHICH ARE FOUNDATIONAL FOR CLASSROOM SUCCESS.

IN WHAT WAYS DOES YOUR CHILD INTERACT WITH OTHER CHILDREN OR ADULTS OUTSIDE THE FAMILY, WHAT STRENGTHS AND STRUGGLES DO YOU NOTICE?

PURPOSE: OPENS DISCUSSION AROUND SOCIAL SKILLS, COMMUNICATION, TURN-TAKING, AND ADAPTABILITY IN GROUP SETTINGS.



ROUTINES FOSTER A SENSE OF SECURITY AND HELP REDUCE ANXIETY IN CHILDREN WITH AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL NEEDS. - CENTRE ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD, HARVARD UNIVERSITY (2011).

**What parts of your day already follow a predictable routine, and how does your child respond to them?**

Purpose: Helps identify existing structure and recognise the calming effect of familiar patterns.

**Are there any times of day (like mornings or bedtime) that feel rushed, stressful, or unpredictable? What could help make these moments calmer?**

Purpose: Encourages parents to pinpoint challenging transitions and explore gentle adjustments.

**What simple routine could you introduce or strengthen this week to help your child feel more secure and prepared for school?**

Purpose: Inspires intentional action - adding even one new consistent step can increase predictability and reduce anxiety.

## **Key Area 1**

### **Practical Strategies:**

**Feelings Check-In Chart:** Use visuals or faces to help children show how they feel.

**Emotion Thermometers:** Colour-coded zones to help children track rising emotions.

**Co-regulation Tools:** Deep breathing, rhythm games, hugs, calming voice tones.

## **Key Area 2**

### **Practical Strategies:**

**Goodbye Rituals:** A special handshake, hug, or mantra (e.g., "You go, I go, we both grow").

**Transition Object:** Let your child bring a small item from home (e.g., a photo, heart stone, worry doll).

**Predictable Language:** Use the same short, warm goodbye every time (e.g., "I love you, I'll see you after lunch").

## **Key Area 3**

### **Practical Strategies:**

**Name It to Tame It:** Help your child name the emotion they're feeling, this alone reduces its intensity.

**Validate First, Then Guide:** "It's okay to feel nervous. Lots of kids do. Let's talk about what helps you feel braver."

**Practice Scripts:** Teach your child simple ways to ask for help at school or express how they feel.