

Jittery about sending your child to nursery or kindie? Here's how you should prepare

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DEC 22, 2021

To prepare your child for a good first day at the nursery or kindergarten, use pretend play to introduce the idea of school, and pay attention to your child's worries and non-verbal communication.

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When your baby is born, your excitement knows no bounds. You want to spend every waking hour with your little one. Your baby's growing up years is so fascinating that you lose count of time. Suddenly, you realize that it's time for your darling to go to a nursery or kindergarten.

It's a major milestone for the child—with this, she will practically begin her foray into the outside world. At this stage, you might be feeling conflicting emotions. On the one hand, you might feel excited about all the fun that your child will have and how she will make new friends. On the other, you feel a bit sad that your baby is going out into the world without you.

It's not just you, mum. Your child will also have feelings about this major change in her life. She might be feeling scared about being separated from you or starting something totally anew, with strangers.

However, fret not—here's help for you. There's a lot you can do as preparation in the weeks before your child goes to a kindergarten or nursery. The fundamental thing to do is to encourage your child to talk to you and try not to put any kind of pressure on him or her.

Here are some tips to help you and your child sail through this period of transition. However, please remember that this is not a perfect solution—the trick is to do your best and believe that it will turn out right.

Use ‘Pretend Play’ to introduce the idea of preschool

Mums, play is one of the best ways to get across to your child, whatever you want to communicate. When you pretend to play school with your child, he or she gets introduced to the idea in a fun and easy way.

Gamify self-help skills

Imparting self-help skills through play is an important part of getting your child preschool-ready. Some skills you can play out with your child, for example, are unzipping the coat, hanging things on hook, putting on the backpack, wearing socks and shoes, and so on. A day prior to the start of the school, you could play picnic with your child and get him or her to practice opening the lunch box and enjoying its contents. These are some important skills needed for the first day.

Pay attention to your child’s worries and non-verbal messages

Once your child is introduced to the concept of school and gets to know that he or she is going to preschool, take a backseat and allow your child to take charge. The tiny heart and mind could have lots of doubts and questions about this new chapter of his or her life. You can help your child get preschool-ready with a simple, yet effective strategy; that is, listening to your child’s worries and noticing non-verbal messages.

How to listen to your child’s worries

Mums, whether big or small, a child’s worry about his or her pre-school is important in shaping up his or her experience there.

So to begin with, let your child know that feeling a range of emotions, including fear, when embarking on something new is normal and natural. You can share your own experiences when you ventured into something new or unknown. This will help them open up and encourage them to share their feelings with you.

Your child may bombard you with questions such as whether the teacher will be nice or even something like what if you forget to pick him or her up from school. You have to reassure them that you will be there for them when school gets over, or that the sweet teachers will take care of them until mum comes to pick them up.

Mums, do keep in mind that when you allow your little ones to share their worries with you, it becomes possible to help them think about how to deal with it. For example, if your child asks you what if he or she misses you when you aren't around, you can tell them that this would take only a few hours and they will see mummy soon.

Mums, when your child comes to you with a concern, you might find it easier to quickly reassure him or her and move on. However, it's important that your child knows his worries have been heard.

Decoding your child's non-verbal messages

Another way in which your child may communicate his or her worries to you is by non-verbal methods because the child may not be able to express feelings or speak about the worries. At such times, they might act it out. For example, he or she might become clingy, withdrawn or more aggressive.

One more common reaction that children may have to leaping in one area of life is to retreat in some other areas. So your potty-trained child who is about to start preschool might start having toilet accidents or he or she may take more attention by asking you to feed or dress.

Mums, although such regressed behaviour can get the better off you, allow your child to play it out. This will help him or her return to their normal self sooner. As a parent, you must remember that your tot is facing and managing a significant change in his or her life and requires your support, nurturing and patience to make this transition with comfort and ease.

When the countdown begins...

Mums, the days before the preschool starts are bound to fly by quickly. Keep these few things in mind as the countdown to your child's D-Day begins:

2 weeks ahead: 5 things to do before your child starts going to the preschool:

1. Allow your child to pick a backpack for his or her preschool. This helps in giving your child a sense of control. It also emphasises that he or she is now a 'big kid'.
2. Label everything that your child will take to preschool, such as backpack, jacket, shoes, blanket, toys and so on, with your child's and his or her teacher's name in permanent ink.
3. In case your child has any special medical needs, do not forget to contact the preschool's health professional. You may need to fill out forms or there could be

special rules so that your child can receive the medication at school.

4. Mums', talking to your child about their routine in the morning and afternoon is also essential. Share with your child about how you intend to drop them to school and bring them back. Do introduce them to a caretaker if you are planning to use one.
5. Get your child into the habit of school bedtime quite in advance. This will help your child get into a bedtime schedule.

Night before: 4 Things to do before your child joins pre-school:

1. Take time to answer your child's last minute questions
2. Allow your little one to choose clothes for her first day, make sure that the outfit is appropriate to the weather and school.
3. Give your child a good night's sleep and pick a bedtime that will help in soothing and relaxing the child. Best not to focus on the first day of school and keep things normal, unless your child wants to talk about it.

Ah, it's here! The First Day of Preschool!

1. To avoid having to rush to preschool, make sure you and your child wake up in time.
2. Spend time with your child as he or she eats breakfast. You could eat together or just chat as your angel nom noms on his or her favourite food.
3. Give your child an overview of the day. Remind him or her about what the preschool will be like or how he or she will be getting back home and so on.
4. Do the backpacking together. If he or she has to carry lunch then pack his or her favourite food. You could also add a favourite toy or a stuffed animal. This kind of familiarity will help in making the transition easier for your child.

Leaving your child at the preschool

Leaving your child at the preschool and saying goodbye can be one of the toughest things that a mum can face. Here are a few tips to make it easy for both of you:

- Stay around for a while: Mums, you could stay back at the school for 15 to 30 minutes past time and help your child get comfortable with other kids and the space. Once your child has opened up, you can leave. Or if your child is taking longer to adjust, you could ask his or her teacher to take care of your child as you leave.
- Keep a positive and upbeat mood: Saying a quick and happy goodbye that is reassuring for your child can do the trick, too. As children get influenced by your feelings, be careful about not showing your worry or sadness.
- Create a goodbye routine: Goodbye routines make your child comfortable and also prepare him or her for whatever is coming up next, in this case, he or she

will be at preschool and away from you.

- Resist the rescue: Mums, you might feel an urge to run back and comfort your sad and upset child, but this will do him or her no good. This will send across a message to your child that he or she is safe only in your presence making it tougher for him or her to adapt.

The above are quite basic and there are many more strategies that might prove to be beneficial for you as a mum. It's easier said than done, as they say, but as long as you remain in control of yourself and keep a cheerful and positive disposition, you and little will do just fine through this new phase in your life.

References:

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