



Preschool Readiness: A Gentle Guide for Parents

The checklist I wish I'd had before my son started school

When my oldest son started preschool, I thought I knew what to expect - circle time, learning shapes, practicing with scissors, and all the sweet first-school moments. What I didn't realize was that some skills were already expected before he ever walked through the classroom door.

I remember sitting in my first parent-teacher conference, excited to hear how he was adjusting. Instead, I found myself holding back tears as I listened to concerns about areas where he was struggling. I was surprised to learn he was expected to recognize his name, begin forming letters, and have experience with pre-writing strokes. I had assumed pre-school would be where those skills were introduced.

Every preschool is different, but many programs begin working on early writing skills much sooner than parents expect. This guide isn't meant to create pressure - it's simply here to help you feel informed, prepared, and supported as your child begins this new chapter.

My hope is that this gentle checklist helps you understand what skills may come up during the preschool years, and gives you simple ways to practice them at home. You don't need perfection. You don't need hours of worksheets. You just need small, meaningful moments of practice.

You're doing a wonderful job.
Let's take this one step at a time.

The Preschool Checklist I Wish I'd Had Before My Son Started School

Use this checklist to identify strengths, celebrate progress, and discover skills that may be helpful before preschool begins

The Skills that Caught



Me Off Guard

- ☐ Recognizes their name among other names
- ☐ Attempts to write first name
- ☐ Draws a square
- ☐ Copies a simple drawing, shape, or letter

Social Skills

- ☐ Takes turns during games
- ☐ Uses words to express needs
- ☐ Separates from caregiver with support
- ☐ Recovers from disappointment

Fine Motor Skills

- ☐ Use tongs or tweezers
- ☐ String beads
- ☐ Holds paper while cutting
- ☐ Manipulate small objects with fingertips

Following Directions

- ☐ Follows a 2-step direction ("Get your backpack and sit on the carpet.")
- ☐ Copies movements during songs or group activities
- ☐ Waits for directions before beginning
- ☐ Participates in a teacher-led activity for 5-10 minutes

Attention & Focus

- ☐ Finishes a simple activity before moving on
- ☐ Looks at a book for several minutes
- ☐ Attempts a task even when it's challenging
- ☐ Watches and copies a demonstration

Independence Skills

- ☐ Open snack containers independently
- ☐ Put on backpack or coat independently
- ☐ Cleans up after activities

What Helped Us

When preschool expectations caught me off guard, we focused on simple activities at home.



Art for Kids Hub

One of the most helpful discoveries for our family was Art for Kids Hub on YouTube.

Following step-by-step drawing lessons helps my boys practice:

- Following directions
- Fine motor skills
- Pencil control
- Motor planning

The goal isn't perfect drawings. The goal is learning to watch, copy, and try



Rainbow Writing

Rainbow writing became another favorite.

By tracing the same shape, letter, or name in multiple colors, children practice:

- Letter and shape formation
- Pencil control
- Fine motor skills
- Attention to detail

Most importantly, it encourages children to slow down and focus on the process.

A Note From One Parent to Another

Your child does not need to master every skill on this checklist before preschool.

The goal isn't perfection.

The goal is building confidence, curiosity, and a willingness to try.

Some of the most important learning happens in everyday moments: reading together, drawing at the kitchen table, tracing shapes in the air, and slowing down long enough to enjoy the process.

You've got this!
Those small moments matter more than you think.

