



## School Readiness

A guide for parents and carers with children starting primary education.

Starting school is a very exciting time for children and an **important step** for them in their educational journey.

Children will need to develop a **variety of skills** to prepare for school.

The transition may bring up a **mixture of emotions** and it's our job as parents to give them the best start to be prepared for school life.

**Every child is different** and will be at different stages of readiness.

School staff understand that children are still learning and will support them while they develop their independence.

# Start School with a smile!

## Dressing yourself

- Dressing and undressing independently is to be encouraged.
- Shoes and socks
- Coats on and off
- Zips and buttons

## Mealtimes

- Opening packets
- Opening lunch tubs and bags
- Knife and Fork –role play
- Drink from a cup
- Trying different foods
- Eating together—social time.

## Potty training

- Use toilet independently
- Clean themselves appropriately
- Understand good hygiene—hand washing
- ERIC guide to potty training
- Asking for help

## Have fun with creative play

- Cooking
- Dressing up
- Turning pages– books
- Colouring
- Junk modelling
- Singing silly songs

## Outdoor play

- Gross motor skills
- Encourage climbing
- Kicking and throwing a ball
- Sitting cross legged on the carpet?

## Fine motor

- Playdoh/Clay/Pastry Dough
- Mark making indoors and outside
- Threading
- Opening bottles and containers
- Using tweezers/Pegs/Scissors

## Sleep

- Good Bedtime routine
- Quiet activities before bed
- Avoid sugary drinks and snacks
- Stop screen and TV 1hr before bed

### Taking turns and sharing

- Being aware of other children's Emotions.
- Playing games
- Modelling sharing
- Talking about situations

### Behave appropriately

- Following routine
- Being kind
- Keep our hands to ourselves
- Following instructions

### Separate from parents/carers

- Talk about school being a safe, funplace.
- Preparing for drop off and pick up.
- Encourage independent play.

### Communication

- Following instructions
- Respecting what they are being asked to do
- Encouraging children to speak to adults
- Listening skills
- Asking questions
- Sharing/reading books

### Social Skills – making friends

- Being kind
- Including others
- Kind feet and hands
- Encouraging children to talk to others in play

### Maintaining Attention

- Activities that need sustain time – puzzles and games.
- Listening skills
- Role-play opportunities

### Dental Care

- Good dental care routine
- Regular Dentist checkups
- Offer water to drink
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks



## Preparing for transition

### ‘School readiness’

Ensuring children are prepared for the transition to primary school is important and encourages **resilience** and **self-confidence**.

It helps children to learn and understand **what’s expected** and **what school will ‘look like’** when they transition to the school environment.

**Regular routines**—such as sleep, mealtimes and caring for teeth— help children feel settled and ready for school. Establishing these habits at home supports both well being and learning.

Families are encouraged to do **what works best for them**, not all children will achieve these skills at the same time for example children with SEND, developmental delay, **English as an Additional Language (EAL)** and summer born children may need adjustments.

Seek advice if you feel that they may need extra support.

Duty Health visitor line: **0300 790 6836** — option 2.

Chat Health Somerset—Health Visiting Text service on: **07480635514**  
or School Nursing Team Text service on **07480635515**





Ensuring children are prepared for the transition to primary school is important and encourages **resilience** and **self-confidence**. Building your resilience and self-confidence can make it easier to try new things!

### **How you can help promote resilience and self-confidence:**

- Encourage healthy risk taking.
- Show acceptance of mistakes and losses.
- Ask questions to encourage independent thinking.
- Praise accomplishments in the right way.
- Define and discuss emotions.
- Promote optimism and positive thinking.
- Encourage interaction with others.
- Show that it's okay to ask for help.
- Show that you can try and do all the above, too!

## Dressing yourself

When children start school, they will need to **dress and undress themselves** for PE or going to the toilet.

Before children start school they can learn to do more things for themselves as part of their daily activities.



### How You can help promote dressing and undressing skills:

- **Role-play**—dressing up clothes and dressing dolls can be a great way to encourage independent dressing and undressing.
- Choose **loose fitting clothes** with minimum fastenings. (easy openings, stretchy socks and elasticated waists)
- **Encourage your child to assist** with undressing/dressing and **describe** what you're doing for example by waiting for your child to push their arm through a sleeve.
- Make sure your child is **well supported** in sitting or standing so that their hands are free to use. Hold onto something if they need support.
- Undressing is easier than dressing.
- Establish a **routine** to keep the activity predictable.
- Try to practise when you can **give the child time**.
- Lay the clothes out **in the order** they are put on. Lay jumpers out with the bottom edge nearest the child and the neck furthest away.
- **Simple verbal and gestures** e.g. “give me your foot” while holding out your hand.
- Dress in **front of a mirror!**
- **Model it**—show them you dressing!
- **Lots of praise and encouragement**—mistakes are OK.



## Building Skills—Scaffolding

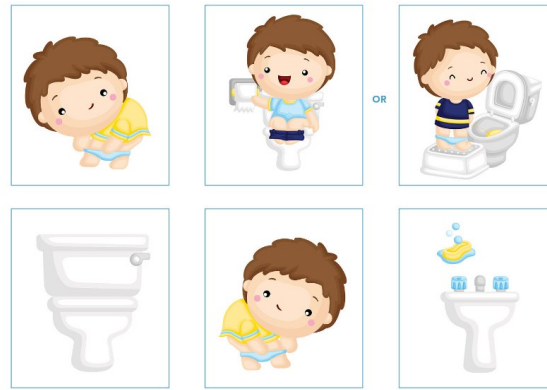
The idea is that children can more readily understand new lessons and concepts if they have support as they're learning.

**IMPORTANT:** Remember to reinforce their effort and give lots of positive feedback.

- As a parent you can support your child to master any task by providing enough **support or 'Scaffolding'** to enable them to be successful. This builds their self-esteem, and so hopefully they will want to keep trying and succeeding.
- Start by **breaking down a task into simple steps**, do more of the steps at the beginning, then build on the steps until they are able to complete the task themselves.
- Scaffolding can also involve teaching a child something new by **building on what they already know** or can do.
- Scaffolding technique can be used by anyone when a child is learning any new task or skill.

Please follow links to advice and activities that can help promote your child's dressing skills:

[Early-Years-Fact-File.pdf \(somersetft.nhs.uk\)](#)



## Potty training and toileting

When children start school, it is important that they can use the **toilet independently**. They will be encouraged to wipe their own bottom and understand good hygiene practices. Children should be encouraged to **wash their hands with soap** and water for 20 seconds.

Some children may struggle with this and **support for parents and carers** can be found below to help encourage independence.

ERIC's guide to potty training:

[Potty training: how to start & best age to potty train - ERIC](#)

ERIC's thinking about wee and poo now you are on your way to school:

[Toilets-and-school-readiness.pdf \(eric.org.uk\)](#)

ERIC's guide to night-time wetting:

[ADVICE FOR CHILDREN WITH NIGHT TIME WETTING \(eric.org.uk\)](#)

Help and support can also be offered via your Health Visiting (under 5's) and School Nursing (over 5's) team.

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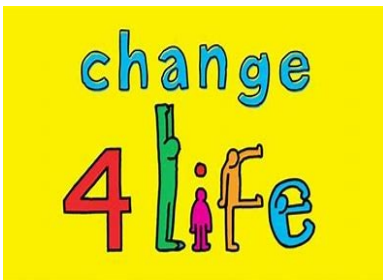
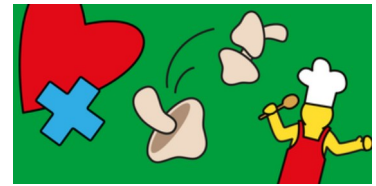
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## Staying Healthy

All children starting school will be able to receive **free school meals**. This can be in the form of a packed lunch or a hot meal. You can also choose to prepare your child's own packed lunch if you so wish.



Below are links to healthy alternatives to sugary lunch box snacks and healthy lunch box ideas.



<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/food-facts/sugar/sugar-swaps-for-kids>

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes#lunchbox-recipes>

## Looking after our bodies

Immunisations:

[NHS vaccinations and when to have them - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

If your child is unwell:

[Help with your children's health - NHS Somerset ICB](#)

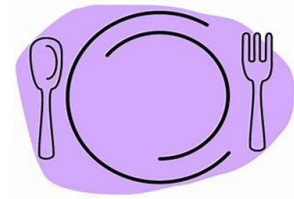
[Home :: Healthier Together \(what0-18.nhs.uk\)](https://what0-18.nhs.uk)

[Paediatric symptom sheet for web.pdf \(chcpcic.org.uk\)](https://chcpcic.org.uk)

Call 111 or 999 in an emergency.



## Mealtimes



- An **important aspect of family and social life**.
- If having a school meal, they may need to know how to use a **knife and a fork to feed themselves**.
- Children begin to develop self-feeding skills from birth.
- Self-feeding is a very complex task and **it is common for children to have difficulty using cutlery** to feed themselves.
- By 5 years a child is learning to spread and cut with a knife.
- It is often not until they are around 7 years of age that a child can use a knife and fork together to cut up food and are truly independent with self-feeding.
- **Practicing these skills** with your child at home can make them feel more confident about doing this at school but don't worry if they're still learning as the school staff will help them to learn this too.
- If your child is going to be having a lunch box, you can teach them which things they should eat first and **build their skills in opening packaging**.

Encourage you child to drink water as most schools healthy eating policies will not allow squash in school.



# The importance of healthy eating for young children

Eating habits are developed early in life.



A healthy, balanced diet and regular exercise are essential for young children's health and wellbeing.



## What is a healthy balanced diet?

Young children need a healthy, balanced diet based on the four food groups, which provide the nutrients to help them grow and develop.

### The four food groups:

1. Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates
2. Fruit and vegetables
3. Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins
4. Dairy and alternatives

Almost one in four children are overweight or obese before they start school. Obese children are more likely to become obese adults, who are more likely to develop a range of health issues.



HM Government

Example menus for early years settings in England can be found [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

## Oral health 3-6 years

It's important to use a **fluoride toothpaste**, as this helps prevent and control tooth decay.

- Brush at least **twice daily for about 2 minutes** with fluoride toothpaste.
- Brush **last thing at night** before bed and at least on 1 other occasion.
- Brushing should be **supervised by a parent or carer** until around 7-8yrs.
- Use children's fluoride toothpaste containing no less than 1,000ppm of fluoride (check label) up to 3yrs, then family toothpaste containing between 1,350ppm and 1,500ppm fluoride.
- Use a **pea-sized amount of toothpaste** – do not refill if child eats the first.
- As they get older, you can encourage them to spit out the froth, but **don't rinse** – if you rinse, the fluoride won't work as well.
- **Guide your child's hand** and **use a mirror** so they can see and feel the correct movement.
- Make toothbrushing as **fun!**
- You could use an egg timer or [Brush DJ app](#).

**Don't** let children run around with a toothbrush in their mouth, as they may have an accident and hurt themselves.

Please look here for more information about dental health:

[British Society of Paediatric Dentistry \(BSPD\) > Kidsvids](#)



**Pea-sized blob of toothpaste**

## The Importance of Sleep



**Sleep is important** for all of us especially for children and young people! Lack of sleep can cause **drowsiness and low mood** in the short term. But lack of sleep can cause **many problems in the long term**.

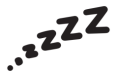
Our brains make sense of what we've experienced in the day and what we've learnt when they sleep. That is why lack of it can make us more forgetful. In fact, there are some studies which show that we can actually **learn new things while we sleep!**

**Sleep also helps our immune systems to work more efficiently** meaning less days off school from colds and illnesses.

## How to get a good night's sleep



- Create a **calming bedtime routine** (for everyday including weekends). This could include a bath, story time or alternative quiet
- **Avoid sugary drinks** and high sugar foods before bed.
- Activity an hour before going to sleep.
- Lower the lights—**darker rooms promote sleep** time.
- **Turn off the TV and screens an hour before** sleep. Blue lights from screens keep the brain active and make it difficult to feel calm.
- Change into pyjamas.



| <b>Your child's age</b>  | <b>Recommended sleep time in 24 hours</b> |
|--------------------------|---|
| Infants 4 to 12 months   | 12 to 16 hours including naps             |
| Children 1 to 2 years    | 11 to 14 hours including naps             |
| Children 3 to 5 years    | 10 to 13 hours including naps             |
| Children 6 to 12 years   | 9 to 12 hours                             |
| Teenagers 13 to 18 years | 8 to 10 hours                             |

## Links for further sleep advice

[Sleep and young children - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

[Home - The Sleep Charity](#)

[Sleep hygiene in children and young people | Great Ormond Street Hospital \(gosh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.gosh.nhs.uk)

## Checking Their Vision

Even if you don't have any concerns about your child's vision, it might be worth getting it checked with an Optician, as being able to see a black/white board or focus on the letters and sounds in the books they will read is very important and a problem may not have come up yet at home.

[Eye tests for children - NHS](#)

The link below will take to a list of opticians close to your postcode. The list may not be up to date but is a rough guide:

[Sight Tests - NHS](#)

## Supporting Communication Skills!

### Listening to sounds

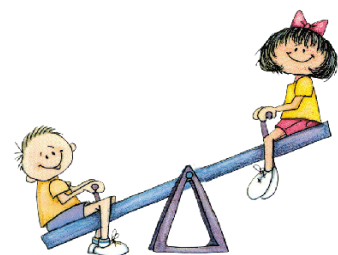
- Continue to introduce your child to new sounds and always tell and show them what makes the sound – “That’s the doorbell ringing”
- Talking about what you are doing, what you see etc.

### Taking turns

- Make a game of giving and receiving as your child begins to understand your requests and follow instructions.
- Play games, like catching a ball, that will allow for turn taking.

### Learning new words

- Help your child learn descriptive words by saying “Oo, the ice cream is **cold**” “Do you want **more** spaghetti?”
- Use new experiences to introduce new words  
(flowers, sand, swing, high, low, up, down)
- Story telling- book areas, puppets, visit the library, Rhyme time
- Time to listen - show and tell, quality time.



## Resources to help support your child's Early Communication and Language skills

Explore simple activities and play ideas and find out about their amazing development.

**Tiny Happy People** – [www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people](http://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people)

**Hungry Little Minds** – [Hungry Little Minds – Simple fun, activities for kids aged 0 – 5 \(campaign.gov.uk\)](http://Hungry Little Minds – Simple fun, activities for kids aged 0 – 5 (campaign.gov.uk))

**ICAN** – [I CAN, the children's communication charity](http://ICAN, the children's communication charity)

Everyday moments can be used to boost your child's learning:

- Playing
- Getting dressed
- Quiet times—calm time to process and regulate.
- Meeting others
- During care routines
- Bedtime stories
- Cooking/baking
- Mealtimes
- In the car
- Out in nature, at the park, at the shops.....etc

## Creative play

Creative play is valuable for developing language, communication and social skills. It is really good for children's imagination and creativity. As well as exploring how the world around them works!



### Creative play ideas:

- Messy play – water, sand, play dough, painting
- Mark making – paintbrushes and water, chalk, cutting and sticking
- Role play
- Treasure baskets – opportunities to experience and explore, encourage curiosity and creativity. A child's imagination and creativity are enriched through their awareness of art and other children around them.

Most importantly have **FUN** with your child

### Supporting Communication of emotions:

- **Create a safe space** to talk about their emotions and worries. Label the specific emotion by saying, “I can hear you are feeling annoyed” or “I can see you are cross/sad/unhappy/frustrated, how can we help you feel better”
- **Remain calm** and model how you deal with emotions in a safe way.
- **Be simple and consistent** with your boundaries and expectations.

## Helping them be positive about School and in general

- Be a **great ROLE MODEL!**
- Help them feel comfortable with and to share their emotions by **listening to and acknowledging any anxious feelings** or fears they may have.
- **Talk to them about school** – what do they think school will be like? What are they most looking forward to? Is there anything they are worried about?
- **Share positive experiences** of your own. Share your memories of your first day or funny and light stories about your time at school so it seems fun and exciting.
- **Read them books** from the library about starting school.
- Teach them how to **problem solve** – “if ‘X’ happens what can you do?” **Encourage their ideas** rather than just tell them what to do.
- Help your child to build their **confidence**. For example, make sure they know that it is ok to ask to go to the toilet at school.
- Encourage them to be thoughtful about other children’s feelings and remember to **take turns and share**.

## Skills that can help the Teacher and support Staff

- Being able to manage changing for PE, with minimal support.
- Encourage you child to peel their own fruit (bananas/oranges) or be happy to eat the skin (apple, pear)
- Be able to at least take off and put on their own shoes/daps.
- Being able to sit and wait for their turn.
- Encourage them to listen to and talk to others.
- Recognise their own name and name labels.

## Last minute Practical Preparation for both you and your child:

- Get your child **used to the times** they will need to get up in the mornings and go to bed.
- Decide **who is taking your child to school** on their first day and prepare them for what will happen on the morning.
- Plan a **treat for the end of the school day**; it's likely they will be tired so a simple trip to the local park or their favourite dinner.
- **Preparing for separation** – use a story books, for example, 'The Invisible String'. Let them know your plans for the day can help – the duller the better.
- Find out **what happens on the first day and talk** about it with your child so that they know what to expect.
- **Tell the school about your child**, e.g. any special needs, medical problems, likes or dislikes.
- Find out more about the school – so you can **talk to them** about it.
- **Be friendly and open with the school**. If you feel annoyed by anything, try to keep a calm head as you will be seeing a lot of them over the years.
- Try to **attend as many meetings** before and after your child starts at the school. If you can't attend, ask for the information to be sent to you.
- If you are **feeling worried**, make sure you have someone to talk to so that your children don't pick up on any negative feelings – and remind yourself that it is perfectly normal to have a bit of the jitters yourself.

## Resources:

Help and support can also be offered via your Health Visiting (under 5's) and School Nursing (over 5's) team.

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School Nursing Team Text service **on 07480635515**

### Play

Tiny Happy People [www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people](http://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people)

Hungry Little Minds: [www.nhs.uk/best-start-in-life/toddler/](http://www.nhs.uk/best-start-in-life/toddler/)

Look, Say, Sing, Play: [www.nspcc.org.uk/advice-for-families/look-say-sing-play](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/advice-for-families/look-say-sing-play)

Attachment and Bonding [www.learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-health-development/attachment-early-years](http://www.learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-health-development/attachment-early-years)

### Healthy eating

Healthy Somerset [healthysomerset.co.uk/starting-well/healthy-eating/](http://healthysomerset.co.uk/starting-well/healthy-eating/)

Healthier Together [www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk/child-under-5-years](http://www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk/child-under-5-years)

### Toileting

ERIC [www.eric.org.uk](http://www.eric.org.uk)

### Communication

Speech and Language UK [speechandlanguage.org.uk/help-for-families/](http://speechandlanguage.org.uk/help-for-families/)

### Accident prevention

Child Accident Prevention Trust [capt.org.uk](http://capt.org.uk)

### Sleep

NHS Sleep support [www.nhs.uk/baby/health/sleep-and-young-children/](http://www.nhs.uk/baby/health/sleep-and-young-children/)