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# Kindergarten Dos and Don'ts: Best Tips for Parents

By [Judy Koutsky](#)

August 18, 2016

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We asked several experts for the best advice for parents whose kids are starting kindergarten. Here's what they said:

## Do:

**Read with your child every day.** “By doing this you are not only modeling reading skills and exposing her to new vocabulary, you are also sending a message that reading is important,” explains Lisa Shechtman, kindergarten teacher in Chester, PA. If you need ideas about appropriate books for kindergarten students, ask the teacher or the school librarian.

**Ask specific questions.** When asking your child about his day, be specific. Such as: What did you do in math today? What book did your teacher read in library? “More focused questions will give a more detailed response,” Caitlin Talan, a kindergarten teacher in Grosse Pointe Woods, MI, says.

**Practice words everywhere.** Building literacy skills are so important in kindergarten and you can help by pointing out grocery store names, street signs, and simple words on packaging. “Parents need to leverage those opportunities to connect sight with sound, by pointing to the written word ‘milk’ on a carton while they say the word out loud,” says Shawna Stueck, a kindergarten teacher in Wisconsin. You can even create signs around the house – on clocks, microwaves, doors – so when you say the word, they also see the object it represents.

**Instill the idea of writing as routine.** Write down the grocery list in front of them and talk about making lists and encourage them to write their own notes. “It may seem insignificant, but these are all building blocks for a strong grasp on reading and writing,” explains Stueck.

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**Plan for plenty of down time.** Don't over program your child with too many extracurricular activities outside of school. "Learning how to manage free time is important, too," says Talan. Plus, in school, your child is negotiating with twenty other kids throughout the day, "so it's healthy to give them some downtime to play and unwind at the end of the day," explains Tim Lightman, an academic administrator and former kindergarten teacher in Bryn Mawr, PA.

## Don't:

**Don't do his homework.** "Provide your child support as needed, but do actually do the work," says Shechtman. Kindergarten students may need help reading directions, but should be able to complete most assigned work independently or with minimal assistance. If your child is having trouble, talk to his teacher.

**Don't take over.** When they fail or are struggling, you can facilitate problem solving, but don't take over says Dr. Tracy Bennett, a clinical psychologist, and adjunct faculty member at California State University Channel Islands.

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#### Author:

Judy Koutsky is an award-winning writer and editor and her work has appeared in over 30 publications, including Conde Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure, Redbook, Parents, Scholastic, and Prevention. She writes often about travel, parenting, health, and lifestyle. Follow her @JudyKoutsky or visit her website

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