

It's Time for School!



You are your child's first and most important teacher. During the first week of school, help your child feel at ease with this new adventure.

by Renee Abramovitz

About School Sparks

www.schoolsparks.com is a free website with tips and resources to help your child start school prepared to succeed. There are hundreds of **kindergarten worksheets**, and new worksheets are added weekly. The website also offers information on the 8 developmental areas that are critical to success in school, including tips for helping your child develop necessary skills in each area. To assess your child's readiness to begin school, there is a **kindergarten readiness test**. At the conclusion of the assessment, you will receive customized feedback about your child's existing skills in each of the 8 developmental areas, plus activity suggestions to help your child accelerate skill development. Lastly, a weekly **blog** covers various topics related to early childhood education, like "Tips For Teaching Your Child The Proper Pencil Grip" and "Teaching Children To Count."

Renee Abramovitz retired from teaching in 2008 to become, as she likes to say, a "full-time grandma." Renee worked in preschool and kindergarten classrooms during her entire teaching career and is passionate about helping young children succeed in school. Although retired, she enjoys continuing to work with young children on school readiness activities and believes that when children start school with a solid foundation of skills, they are poised to begin a lasting cycle of academic success. Renee has three grown children and four young grandchildren. She and her husband recently celebrated 40 years of marriage and live in Columbus, Ohio.

It's Time For School

For most families, the countdown to the first day of school has entered the single digits. Or, maybe your child already has a few days of school under her belt. Whether your child is returning to school as a kindergartener or first grader who attended school last year or whether your child is beginning school this year for the first time, this activity pack will provide a fun and easy way for you to help your child shake off the first day jitters and start school with confidence and ease.

Foremost, this activity pack is designed to be engaging and fun and get your child excited about starting school. The colorful scene that is the basis for this activity pack is brightly colored and filled with charming characters your child will surely enjoy. The activities themselves are designed to be equally fun and can be a wonderful way to give your child an outlet for discussing any fears, apprehensions or excitement she has about the coming school year.

Using This Activity Pack

Begin by showing your child the colorful classroom scene of this activity pack. Let your child spend a few moments just observing the picture, as it contains many small details in addition to the larger pictures of children and a teacher. Once your child is comfortable with the picture, you can use the activity prompts on the following page to help her practice some important school readiness skills including strong listening skills and visual discrimination skills.

Read through the suggested list of “conversation starters” under the Social and Emotional Development heading, and use the colorful classroom scene as a vehicle to talk with your child about starting school and the variety of emotions that may accompany that exciting day. Perhaps your child is nervous about starting a new school or excited about seeing her old friends. Either way, the colorful classroom scene will help your child focus her energy and attention and lead to productive conversations.

Introduce the three worksheets about emotions that follow. These highlight different emotions that your child may experience during the early days of school. Reviewing these worksheets with your child will give her an opportunity to discuss the emotions she is feeling about school and will also help her to realize that emotions like embarrassed, happy, excited, or sad are normal emotions that all children experience.

Lastly, show your child the last worksheet of this activity pack and encourage her to think about the part of school that most excites her. If she is unable to write the sentence herself, allow her to dictate the sentence aloud as you write it for her. Then, she can draw a picture in the space provided to match the words. Children love to express themselves through drawings and this worksheet will give your child an opportunity to fully express herself both through words and through pictures.

Tips for a Stress-Free Start to School

Make sure your child gets enough sleep. Begin adjusting the nighttime routine several weeks before school starts to ensure that your child is bright-eyed when he wakes up in the morning.

Plan school clothes the night before. Let your child set out what he plans to wear to school at night before he goes to sleep. This is ensure that he has the clothes he needs and will eliminate wasted time and energy in the morning.

Pack up the backpack the night before. Program 5 - 10 minutes into the bedtime routine for your child to prepare his backpack for the next day. He will be sure he has the necessary items (including any homework) and can relax and sleep well knowing that he is ready to go.

Limit breakfast choices on school days. Get into the habit of offering just a few simple choices for breakfast. Your child will become accustomed to choosing from your list and there will be no stress about making a decision. Also, easy to fix menu items (cereal, toaster waffles, etc.) make more sense on a school morning when time is limited. Save the elaborate breakfast menus for special weekend treats.

Know the “getting to school” routine the night before. Will your child be getting a ride (and who will be driving?), walking to school (alone or with a friend?) or taking the bus? Know the exact time for leaving and consider writing it on a post-it note or small card in a highly visible part of your home so you and your child can be ready.

Establish the “after school” routine the night before. Making decisions about where your child will go and what he will be doing after school and coordinating those plans may take a bit of time and advanced preparation. School mornings are hectic enough without the stress of figuring out the “after school” plans, as well. Also, children can often relax and sleep better when they know how their next day will go.

Start your day 10 minutes before you really need to. Rarely do mornings go exactly as planned, so adding a few extra minutes into the routine will eliminate unnecessary stress.

WELCOME TO THE CLASSROOM!



KINDERGARTEN THEMES

Welcome to the classroom: Show your child the accompanying classroom scene and, using the guide below, ask him questions and “conversation starters” to help him get ready to start school.

Auditory Processing Skills

- 1 Draw a circle around the globe and draw a square around the clock.
- 2 Draw an X around two of the paper dolls the little girl is showing the teacher.
- 3 Draw an extra umbrella in the container next to the classroom door.
- 4 Draw a line connecting the two children that are working together on a single project.
- 5 Point to three backpacks that are open or unzipped.
- 6 Draw an X over the paper airplane that is about to be launched.
- 7 Draw a heart on the paper where the little boy is drawing hearts.

Visual Discrimination Skills

- 1 How many backpacks are in the classroom?
- 2 Are there any coat hooks that do not have coats hung on them?
- 3 How many people in this classroom are wearing glasses?
- 4 What color is the teacher's sweater?
- 5 Are any of the children wearing short-sleeved shirts?
- 6 How many empty chairs are there in the classroom?
- 7 What color are the art smocks the children are wearing?

Social and Emotional Skills

- 1 Point to each student in the classroom and ask your child how he thinks that student is feeling. Do the students look happy, surprised, excited, or shy? Once your child identifies an appropriate emotion, ask your child to explain why he thinks the student feels that particular way. Use this conversation as an opportunity to help your child realize that different people respond differently to situations. This understanding will help your child not only better identify and manage his own emotions but will also help him show empathy for the emotions of others.
- 2 Ask your child how he thinks he might feel on his first day of school. Explain that it is normal for someone feel a variety of emotions at the same time. For example, your child might be happy to see some old friends, he might be nervous about seeing some unfamiliar faces, he might be excited to see a particular activity like a play kitchen or a sand table in the classroom, or he might be tired from carrying a backpack to school.
- 3 Share with your child an example of when you felt different emotions. Perhaps you remember your first day of school or maybe the first time you went to a new book club or work meeting where you did not know everyone. Hearing that even adults feel emotions like nervousness, excitement, and anxiety will help your child realize they are common emotions.

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Tip for parents: Lay out your child's clothes and pack your child's backpack and lunch the night before the first day of school. That way the morning of the first day of school will be calm and stress-free.

Why keep the fun all to yourself? Please feel free to share this worksheet with friends.

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KINDERGARTEN THEMES

Identifying emotions: Direct your child to label each picture with any appropriate emotion. For example, a smiling child could be happy, excited, eager or glad.



This boy feels _____.



This boy feels _____.



This girl feels _____.



KINDERGARTEN THEMES

Identifying emotions: Direct your child to label each picture with any appropriate emotion. For example, a smiling child could be happy, excited, eager or glad.



This girl feels _____.



This boy feels _____.



This girl feels _____.



KINDERGARTEN THEMES

Identifying emotions: Direct your child to label each picture with any appropriate emotion. For example, a smiling child could be happy, excited, eager or glad.



This boy feels _____.

This girl feels _____.



This boy feels _____.



KINDERGARTEN THEMES

Getting ready for school: Ask your child to write about the part of school that most excites her. Then encourage her to draw a corresponding picture in the space above.



School is fun because

Handwriting practice lines consisting of solid top and bottom lines and a dashed middle line. The first line is blue, and the subsequent lines are orange.

