

Preparing Your Child for Reception



Starting Reception is a big step for children and families, and it is completely normal for this time to feel both exciting and a little worrying. For many children, this is their first experience of starting school and becoming part of a Reception class. It is also natural for parents to feel anxious about how their child will settle, make friends, follow routines and manage the school day. At Beechwood, we understand these feelings and are here to support you and your child every step of the way. The Department for Education highlights that being “school ready” is not about academic learning, but about children having the confidence, independence and communication skills they need to take part in everyday school life. Helping your child to develop these skills at home can make the transition into Reception feel calmer and more positive for everyone. Supporting your child’s independence, communication and self-care at home plays a key role in school readiness. When children are able to do things for themselves, express their needs and follow simple routines, they are more confident and readier to engage in learning.

There are lots of ways you can help your child prepare for starting Reception. Before and as your child starts school, it will help if you are able to support them with the following:

Getting themselves ready and developing independence	Speaking, listening and sharing	Asking for help	Trying different food and tools	Toileting
✓ Show your child how to put on their clothes, shoes, socks and coat, and encourage them to do this independently most of the time ✓ Allow extra time in the mornings or when going out so your child can practise doing things for themselves rather than being rushed ✓ Choose clothes and shoes that are easy for them to get on and off (e.g. Velcro shoes, elastic waistbands) ✓ Make sure clothes and shoes have name labels ✓ Practise checking that clothes and shoes are the right way around and putting them on correctly without help ✓ Practise using buttons and zips so they can manage clothing for toileting and outdoor play ✓ Teach your child to drink from an open cup and manage this independently at mealtimes ✓ Make sure your child is no longer using a dummy ✓ Give positive praise for trying and encourage them to keep going when things feel tricky	✓ Encourage your child to listen and stay focused for short periods (e.g. during a story or activity) ✓ Sing songs, read stories and share books every day, talking about the pictures and asking simple questions about what is happening ✓ Borrow books from the library and let your child choose books that interest them ✓ Take your child to meet and play with other children, giving them opportunities to play independently from you and build confidence with peers ✓ Switch off technology for periods of time and encourage play, conversation and interaction instead ✓ Talk to your child about their day and encourage them to describe events, feelings and experiences ✓ Encourage taking turns and sharing within the family and during play with others ✓ Praise your child for following clear and simple instructions, and practise two-step instructions (e.g. “get your shoes and put them by the door”). Games like “Simon Says” support this ✓ Go on a listening walk to identify different sounds and talk about what you can hear and where the sounds are coming from ✓ Practise greeting adults and responding to simple questions (e.g. “How are you?”)	✓ Encourage your child to have a go and keep trying before asking for help when appropriate ✓ Model how to ask for help using a full sentence (e.g. “Please can you help me?”) and encourage your child to do this independently ✓ Teach your child that it is okay to ask for help and help them recognise when they need support ✓ Play alongside your child and talk about what you are doing, encouraging them to describe their own play and ideas ✓ Let your child ask others for things in shops or cafés and involve them in choosing and paying to build confidence speaking to unfamiliar adults ✓ Talk to your child about who they can ask for help when they start school (e.g. teacher, teaching assistants, other children) ✓ Encourage your child to try simple solutions first (e.g. “Can you fix it?” before stepping in)	✓ Regularly take part in fun activities to get hands and fingers moving (e.g. playdough, construction toys, threading) and encourage your child to use tools with increasing control ✓ Sing and play finger rhymes (e.g. Incy Wincy Spider, Five Little Ducks) ✓ Use pencils, crayons and paintbrushes to practise making marks and begin to develop control (e.g. holding tools with a comfortable grip) ✓ Provide opportunities for climbing, balancing, running and outdoor play ✓ Encourage activities like cutting with child-safe scissors, drawing simple shapes, and using small tools ✓ Eat family meals together at a table and encourage your child to sit, eat and stay for short periods ✓ Buy and explore new foods together and talk about tastes, textures and preferences ✓ Show your child how to use a knife, fork and spoon and encourage them to use these independently at mealtimes ✓ Support your child to open lunch items (e.g. packets, containers) independently	✓ Talk to your child about going to the toilet and help them understand when and why they need to go ✓ Read age-appropriate books about toileting and use these to build confidence and understanding ✓ Encourage your child to say when they need the toilet and begin to go independently without needing reminders (including wiping) ✓ Show your child how to wash and dry their hands and encourage them to do this thoroughly and independently ✓ Remind your child to wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating and help this become a consistent habit ✓ Make sure your child wears clothes they can take down and put back on themselves ✓ Use praise and encouragement (such as reward charts if helpful) to build confidence and reinforce independence ✓ Ask for support from your local health visiting team (0–5 years) if needed ✓ Use the useful links on our EYFS page on the school website to support you when toilet training your child