

MY FIRST
DESK



GROWN-UP HANDBOOK

For Kindergarten Readiness

**A PLAY-BASED GUIDE TO
BUILDING LIFELONG LEARNERS**

Lets get started!



WHAT MATTERS MOST

This toolkit focuses on:

- Learning through play
- Building confidence
- Developing real-world skills
- Supporting how children learn—not just what they learn

Building Attention:

Attention is an important skill for kindergarten readiness. For adult-directed tasks, children can typically focus for about 1 minute per year of age (4-year-old = 4 minutes). Children stay engaged much longer during play!

How to use this toolkit:

- Follow child's lead
- Keep activities short and playful
- Repeat often

**CONFIDENCE STARTS
BEFORE DAY ONE**



PER-HANDWRITING DRY ERASE SLANT BOARD™

Activity 1:

Roll and Write

Before children can write letters or shapes well, they need to master basic strokes.

Practice these often on the slant board:

Vertical lines | | | | | | | |

Horizontal lines - - - - -

Circles o o o o o o o

Crosses + + + + + + +

Squares, Triangles, Zigzags, Curved lines

Roll the dice and write that number of lines, shapes, or even letters.

Activity 3:

Connect the Dots

Parent draws random dots and child connects dots using the ruler to make straight lines.

Parent draws dots to make large shapes. Child connects dots and names shape.

Parent draws dots to make letters of child's name. Child connects dots to form letters and names each letter.

Activity 5:

Draw, Measure, Record

Draw a straight line using the ruler. Use ruler to measure the line. Place a clothespin on the number line to record the length of the line. Repeat this with a second line and move the clothes pin up the number line to show the length of two lines added together.

Why it matters:

Learning to write on a slant board

- Promotes better hand position and better grasp
- Supports good posture
- Strengthens hand and finger muscles and builds control
- Improves visual skills to help with letter formation, size and spacing

Activity 2:

Copy Cat Pattern Challenge

Parent draws a pattern XOXOXO.

Child copies pattern underneath while saying shape or letter out loud.

*Take turns being the leader

Activity 4:

Trace, Erase, Trace

Trace the stencil with the dry erase marker.

Draw a background for the image.

Erase. Trace again and draw a new

background. Discuss the backgrounds and why the child created them.



SELF-CARE SKILLS

Why it matters: Independence builds confidence

- Practice managing clothes when using toilet
- Practice putting on coat, engaging zipper, and pulling it up! – Also practice buttons
- Practice washing hands while singing alphabet
- Practice putting on shoes and socks
- Practice opening snack containers such as ziplock bags and small packages
- Practice managing and drinking from water bottles

Activity 1:

Practice tying shoes with the shoe-tying lacing card.

1. Child strings laces through the holes in the card.
2. Adult demonstrates tying laces in a bow while narrating steps, then again leaving the last step for child to do.
3. Adult ties shoe a third time, leaving the last 2 steps for the child to do.
4. Repeat this until child is able to complete all the steps while adult narrates.



Dr. Aimee Tip for Success:

This strategy is called “**backward chaining**” and it helps children feel successful because they are always completing the activity. Praise them after every attempt. Even if they only do the last step.

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PRE-LITERACY SKILLS

Why it matters: Language is the foundation for reading

- Point out letters and sounds on signs, cereal boxes and in books
- Form letters out of play-dough
- Trace letters in magazines and on labels

Activity 1: Story Prediction

While reading a book to your child, pause and ask child what they think will happen next. Talk about making a prediction and use terms such as first, next, then, and finally to discuss sequence.



Activity 2: Tracing Letters Activity

1. Child uses finger to trace letters on box.
2. Child uses finger to make large letters in the air while saying letter and letter sound aloud.

Write letters in
shaving cream!



Activity 3: Roll and Rhyme

1. Player 1 says a word.
2. Player 2 rolls dice and adds dice together.
3. Player 2 says that number of words that rhyme with word.
4. Take turns.



Activity 4: Read and Review

While reading Ready for Kindergarten, pause to ask child the interactive questions. Build on their answers to start a discussion about going to kindergarten.

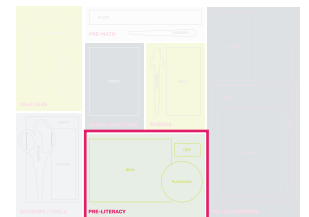


Dr. Aimee

Tip for Success:

Build language by narrating child's play. Ask questions and talk about what they are doing and why.

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PRE-WRITING SKILLS

Activity 1: Alphabet Laundry

1. Hang string with clips like laundry line.
2. Write one letter of name on each card.
3. Sequence cards and hang on line with clothes pins.

Try other words too!



Activity 2: Spin Top Race

1. On hands and knees on floor, child and adult take turns spinning spinner using 3 fingers.
2. Count seconds together.
3. Longest spin gets a point- repeat

(Teaches patience, turn taking and weights bearing on floor builds strength)



Why it matters: Strong hands = Easier writing

- Color in shapes on box with crayons, try to control hand
- Trace letters on box while adult narrates (start at top, go down)
- Press beads in play-dough and remove with tweezers
- Practice using two hands by holding stencil still with one and tracing design with other hand or stringing beads

Activity 3: Sticker Placement

1. Peel and stick sticker in circles on box.
2. Peel and stick sticker on line around sides of box.
3. Adult narrates placement of sticker "on" the line to teach letter placement when writing.



Pencil Grasp Progression



1-1.5 Yrs



2-3 Yrs

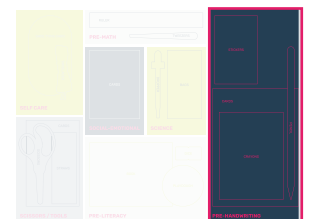


3.5-4 Yrs



4.5 and up

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Dr. Aimee

Tip for Success:

Children usually establish hand dominance before kindergarten. If your child is still switching hands, try two-hand tasks that require a stabilizer and an active hand such as lacing or stringing beads to build coordination in dominant hand and strength in other.

PRE-MATH SKILLS

Activity 1:

Play-dough Treasure Count

1. Roll dice. Add two dice together.
2. Count out that amount of beads.
3. Smash beads into the play-dough.
4. Use fingers or tweezers to remove each bead.
5. Continually ask child how many beads are left to find in the play-dough.



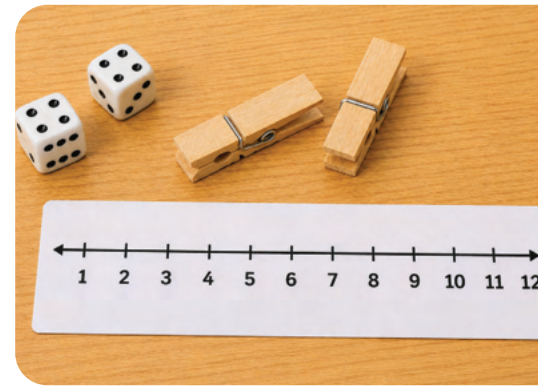
Why it matters: Understanding numbers makes math easier

- Count everyday items—snacks, toys, steps, or cars going by
- Have your child touch each item while counting to connect numbers to objects
- Put items in groups and talk about “more” and “less”
- Add items to groups and take them away to show addition and subtraction
- Pour, scoop, and measure while cooking or baking together
- Sort and categorize items by color, size, or type. Discuss likes and differences

Activity 2:

Number Line Fun

1. Roll one die.
2. Place clothespin on that number on the number line.
3. Roll second die.
4. Move clothespin number of second die to show addition of numbers.



Activity 3:

Measure and Compare

1. Child uses ruler to measure their hand from wrist to tip of fingers.
2. Find items that are longer and shorter than their hand.

*Encourage them to make predictions

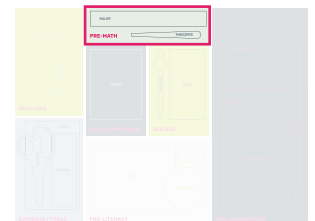


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Tip for Success:

Start simple and use real items, not worksheets for math learning!

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SCISSOR / TOOL USE

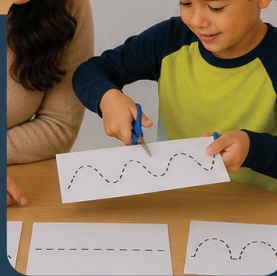
Why it matters:
Knowing “tools” of kindergarten makes the transition easier.

- Use tools such as gluesticks, dice, scissors, and rulers to become familiar with tools of kindergarten
- Strengthen hands by using clothespins to clip around the edge of the box, using tweezers to pick up small items, tearing paper into strips, kneading play-dough, and using eye dropper to transfer water

Activity 1:

Scissor Skill Progression

1. Hold straw in one hand and snip it into 1/4" pieces.
2. Collect pieces and string them onto pipe cleaner, alternating with beads to make a pattern bracelet.
3. Snip along edges of scissor card following bold lines.
4. Snip across card from one side to the other.
5. Once child is able to open and close scissors and snip along a line, try cutting out shapes on thick card.
6. Next practice cutting with thinner paper.



**Always supervise
scissor activities**



Activity 2:

Shape cutting with Scissor

1. Flatten play-dough into a thin pizza with the palm of hand.
2. Use scissors to snip “pizza” into triangles.
3. Roll play-dough into a ball, then with both hands, roll into a hot dog.
4. Use scissors to snip “hot dog” into equal size pieces. Measure pieces with ruler and discuss size. (Smaller, Larger)

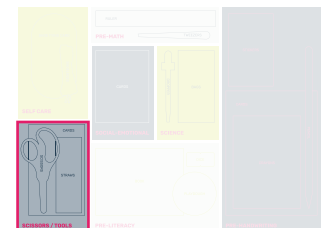


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Tip for Success:

Draw a smiley face on child's thumb nail so while they are snipping you can remind them to keep their thumb up by saying “Where is the smiley face?”

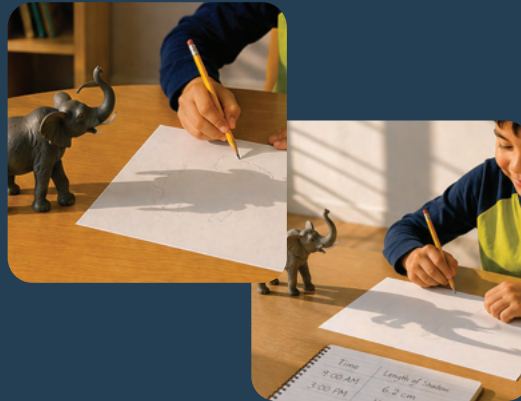
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SCIENCE & CURIOSITY

Activity 1: Animal Shadows

1. Either use a flashlight or sunlight.
2. Place plastic animal next to paper.
3. Trace the shadow. Measure shadow with ruler.
4. Move flashlight or wait for time to pass and trace shadow and measure again. Write down numbers and compare.
5. Discuss the change. Did shadows grow or shrink? Discuss angles, length, width, size and direction. Also discuss the rotation of the earth and the angle of the sun.

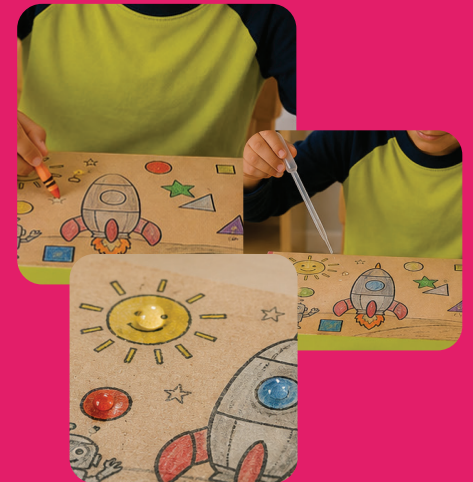


Why it matters: Curiosity drives life long learning

- Use tools such as gluesticks, dice, scissors, and rulers
- Encourage children to make predictions during play and stories
- Record observations in pictures to teach the scientific method.
- Go on a nature walk and collect items. Sort them and discuss

Activity 2: Eye Dropper Discovery

1. Color the shapes on the box with a crayon.
2. Use the eye dropper to drop 3 drops of water on the box.
3. Drop 3 drops of water onto colored shape and watch it bead.
4. Discuss how paper is porous and wax is not.



Activity 3: Nature Walk

Go on nature walk and collect items in paper bag (supplied). Bring items home and sort them by size, color or texture. Create patterns. Discuss likes and differences.

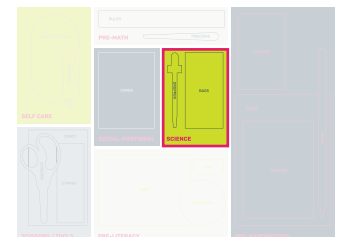


Additional Activity

1. Fill a few cups with water. Add food coloring to color water different colors.
2. Child fills eye dropper with colored water and drops it onto paper towel, watching colors blend.
3. Make predictions about what new colors will emerge.
4. Discuss cause and effect.



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SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Why it matters:
Children learn best when they feel safe and confident

Activity 1:

Play Date Cards

1. Write name on play date cards
2. Discuss who your child wants to set up a play date with and rehearse how to ask child to play with them.
3. Child gives card to a friend!



- Discuss feelings and emotions of characters in books and shows
- Set up play dates to allow children to practice social skills
- Play games that require taking turns
- Wait before offering help to teach problem solving skills
- Make child wait a few seconds for your attention

Activity 2:

Name Emotions

Use the emotion icons below to help your child name the emotions they are feeling. Discuss the feeling and talk about a time when you felt that way. This gives children language to tell us how they feel.



Activity 3:

Social + Emotional puppet

Use included brown paper bag to make a puppet by drawing face and clothes with crayons on bag. Name puppet. Use puppet to help child express emotions by asking the puppet questions and allowing child to respond as the puppet.



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