



What You Can Do to Support School Readiness Skills: 24 to 36 Months

Language & Literacy Skills

Talk together. Talk about everything! The more you talk, the more words they will learn. Tell each other stories. Singing with children also teaches new words and ideas. Remember, at this age, toddlers can understand more than they can say.

Share books together. Point to pictures in books and ask toddlers what they think is happening. Make connections between books and “real life”: “Look, there’s a school bus just like the one in our story today.” Let toddlers choose their own books—they enjoy picking their favorites.

Thinking Skills

Encourage imaginative play. Let toddlers take the lead in playtime. This helps them develop their own ideas. You can ask: “Who should I pretend to be? What happens next?” Help children learn to be logical thinkers by building on the stories they’re creating: “You said the baby doll is crying. Do you think she is hungry or does she have a boo-boo?”

Make math part of your everyday routines. Count as you climb the stairs. Notice patterns around you like the stripes on a child’s shirt. See if children would like to sort toys such as little cars and big cars into piles.

Self-Control

Give choices. Present a toddler with two acceptable options and let him choose: “Would you like to have a snack first or cleanup first?” If they really don’t have a choice, don’t offer one. Instead of “Are you ready for a nap?” Say, “It’s naptime. Which book do you want to read before lights out?”

Play turn-taking games. Activities like taking turns hitting a ball off a tee, making music as a group, or passing a toy around a circle all help children “practice” taking turns. This is a crucial skill for building strong friendships.

Self-Confidence

Give children responsibilities. Children feel proud when they can show you how they lay out napkins for snack or water plants. Be specific about what you want them to do: “Please pick up your blocks” instead of “Please clean up.”

Encourage children to ask for help. Let children know that you see they’re struggling and ask what help they want: “Getting shoes on can be so hard! Sometimes opening up the laces can make it easier. Can I help you loosen them?” Let children see that you need help sometimes too.