

St. Mary's Primary School,
Draperstown
Draperstown



"Learning, Caring and Sharing Together"

30 Things To Do Before You Start School



Gold Award



10 Top Tips For Parents From Parents

1. Put name labels on all of your child's belongings.
2. If you are feeling anxious or worried about your child starting school try not to let it show in front of them.
3. Check the route from home to school. If you are driving check where you can park safely.
4. If you are unable to drop off or pick up make arrangements in advance and let the school know.
5. Make sure that you keep your contact details up to date with the school office.
6. When shopping for school shoes and coats make sure they are practical for all weathers.
7. Give your child time to practise dressing in their new uniform, school coat and shoes.
8. Look at the school website as it offers lots of information about the school.
9. Check your child's bag every Monday for notes or letters that have been sent home. Sign their reading record every night.
10. If the school offers information days, workshops or a chance to visit try your best to attend.



30 things to
try before
you start
school!

1. Blow bubbles.

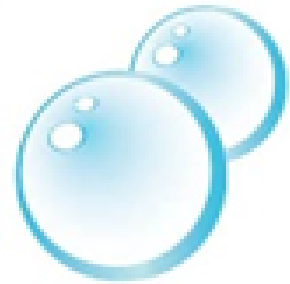
Bubble play is fun and helps to develop a range of skills.

Following Directions

Give your child directions on how to pop the bubbles, clap them, poke them, squeeze them and jump on them. Pop the bubbles with your elbow, finger knee or toe.

Give a sequence of directions, first poke them, then squeeze them and pop them with your knee.

Try playing music of different tempos for your child to pop bubbles to.



You will need

Bubble mixture

Space to move

You might Like

Music

Questions

What are the bubbles doing?

How are they moving?

Where are they going?

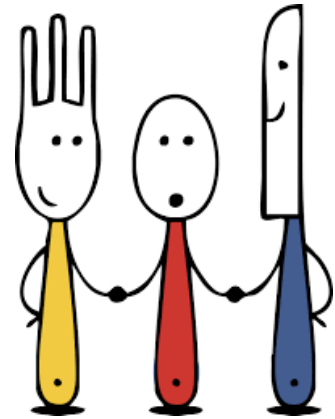
Which one is the biggest/ smallest/ highest, lowest?

Vocabulary

Big, small, tiny, floating, light, pretty, bright, clear, slowly.

2. Use a knife, fork and spoon.

Good table manners are an important skill that should be developed when your child is young.



- Model the correct use of cutlery at meal times.
- Show your child how to hold their food in place with the fork while they use their knife to cut it.
- Make food shapes with play dough for your child to practise cutting with a knife and fork.
- Encourage your child to hold their cutlery in the correct hands throughout meal times.
- Praise your child when they use their cutlery rather than their hands.
- Eating meals at the table will help your child to use cutlery correctly as their plate will be on a solid base.
- Give your child opportunities to cut their food themselves.

Vocabulary

Knife, fork, spoon, plate, bowl, table mat, coaster, table cloth.

3. Climb a tree.

You will need

Trees

Look for a tree with strong trunks and thick branches, branches that are close together and free from decay.



Climbing is excellent for gross motor development. It promotes self-confidence, builds critical thinking skills, helps children assess risks, builds resilience, exercises the imagination and provides a sense of achievement.

Explain to your child that they do not need to climb to the top to have fun or to be a tree climber.

Safety

Avoid climbing trees when they are wet and slippery.

Your child should only climb to a height that they feel happy with and have previously agreed.

When climbing back down remind your child there is no rush.

4. Go to the park.

Parks are a wonderful free resource which provide hours of fun for your child.

Play is essential for healthy development, but free, spontaneous play is highly beneficial for your child.

Play equipment gives your child the opportunity to-

- Strengthen muscles
- Learn to assess risks
- Use different movements/ body parts
- Socialise with other children
- Take part in imaginative play
- Build stamina



The park also provides you and your child with the space to play ball games, fly a kite, run around, ride a bike, have a picnic and meet friends.

Many parks also give you the opportunity to explore wooded areas and see a variety of wildlife and trees.

5. Thread beads on a string.

Threading helps develop many skills.

This activity helps:

- Hand-eye co-ordination
- Fine motor skills
- Dressing skills
- Pencil grasp and control
- Planning
- Organisation

It also provides the opportunity for self-expression and a sense of accomplishment.



You will need

Beads or pasta

String, pipe cleaners or straws

Use beads and strings to create necklaces and bracelets. Stick straws into play dough to thread pasta onto. Encourage your child to create patterns when threading with colours and shapes

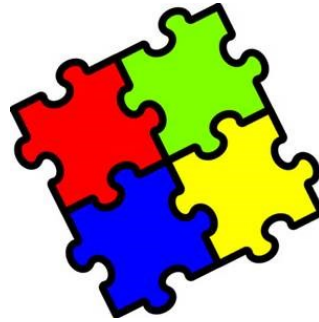
Vocabulary

Pattern, shape, size, thread, push, pull, same, different.

6. Complete a tricky puzzle.

You will need

Puzzles



Puzzles are a fantastic way to challenge your child's thinking. They provide many learning opportunities.

Playing with puzzles increases your child's spatial awareness and hand-eye coordination.

Completing a puzzle sets a single goal and provides a sense of achievement.

Your child must think and develop strategies on how to approach and complete the puzzle.

Questions

Where could this piece go?

What shape is it?

Have you tried turning it?

What picture have the shapes made?

Vocabulary

Shape, size, bigger, smaller, same, different, match, lift, in, out, turn

7. Help put the shopping away.

Getting your child involved in jobs around the house will benefit everyone.

Being involved will also make your child feel competent and responsible.

Talk about where each item belongs (fridge, freezer or cupboard) and why.

As you put the shopping away talk to your child about the shape and size of the items, Give them the opportunities to handle the items and discuss the weight and size.



Questions

Where does this go?

Which is the biggest/ smallest/ heaviest/ lightest?

Can you pass me the tins/ packets?

Vocabulary

High, low, big, small, packet, tin, bottle, light, heavy, shelf, drawer.

8. Use Scissors.

The best sort of scissors for children to use for cutting is child safe scissors with metal blades. The plastic bladed scissors are very difficult to cut with and often causes the child to become frustrated.

To help your child learn to use scissors you can use the plastic bladed ones with play dough or teaching scissors to help guide your child's movements.



Vocabulary

Open
Close
Cut
Forward
Sharp



You will need

Child safe scissors
Old catalogues, birthday/ Christmas cards, magazines and leaflets

You might like

Cutting skills sheets which you can download online or draw a variety of lines, zig-zags and wiggles on a piece of paper for your child to cut along.

9. Go to the toilet by yourself.



Of all the practical skills to practise and master, going to the toilet is probably the most important one.

Encouraging your child to become confident in getting to the toilet in time, wiping properly, flushing the toilet and washing their hands will have a positive impact on their self-esteem when they start school. If they are independent in this skills they are also less likely to have an accident.

10. Put your shoes on

Top Tip

Write the letters L& R on the inside of their shoes so that your child can identify the left and right foot.

At school most children will have to clean and tidy their shoes after we have played outside in the sandpit.

Tying shoe laces is a tricky skill to learn. When buying shoes for school look for shoes that zip or Velcro. Give your child opportunities to practise changing their own footwear.

11. Make a shopping list.

Making a shopping list with your child is an excellent way to introduce your child to new vocabulary.



Cut out pictures from leaflets, flyers and packing and stick them on to paper to create a list.

Look at a receipt together and make a list of the ingredients you need to buy.

Give your child a small number of items from your list that they can create their own list.

Create a pretend shopping list for your shopping game or for ingredients to make your potion.

Let your child draw or mark make to create their list. You can then write the item name below their picture.

Your child can then take responsibility for their list during the shopping trip. They can look for the items, select the correct size or quantity and tick items off their list.

12. Help set the table.



You will need

Placemats

Plates, bowls,
cups, knives,
forks and spoons

Sharing responsibility and having a job to do can make children feel important. Setting the table is an easy way to involve children in meal times.

Setting places allows children to share items out and match the correct amount of items to the amount of people.

Questions

Have we got enough? Do we need any more?
Where is Daddy/ Mummy sitting?
Who is sitting next to Daddy/ Mummy?

Vocabulary

Plate, bowl, cup, glass, knife, fork, spoon, crockery, cutlery, placemat, coaster, place, each, share, more, less, next to.
Your child could make place cards/ mats for each member of the family to add to the table.

13. Give a hug.



Giving a hug can help a child to communicate to others that they want to be friends or that they are sorry. A hug can also be used to cheer their friends up if they are upset.

Remember that a child should not have to hug if they don't want to. They can communicate affections with words, a smile, a high 5 or a hand shake.

14. Get yourself dressed.



Top Tips

Buy skirts and trousers with elasticated waist bands. Put name labels on the inside .
back their clothes to help them identify

Getting dresses is an important skill for your child to learn. Being able to dress themselves will build your child's confidence and independence and give them a sense of achievement.

As well as getting dresses, remember to give your child the opportunity to practise.

- Getting undresses
- Folding their clothes into a neat pile
- Turning their clothes from inside out to the right way around.
- Putting on their coat, hat and gloves.

15. Do something kind.

Kindness is an important trait that other children look for in a friend.

Modelling kindness is the best way for your child to learn.

There are many ways that your child can show kindness.
Choose an old toy to take to the charity shop.

Help friends tidy up after playing.

Share a smile.



16. Make a healthy snack.



Involving your child in making their own snacks and meals can help encourage them to try new foods.

Try making a fruit kebab using some fruit that your child likes and adding in ones that they haven't tried before.

Top Tip

Use a straw rather than a skewer for your child to thread the fruit onto.

17. Tell someone about your day.

Your child may seem reluctant to talk about their day at school. This is nothing to worry about and does not mean that your child is unhappy. Children need space and time to process what they have experienced throughout the day.



If you always make time to talk about your day during dinner time, you may find that your child will continue to do this when they start school.

To encourage your child to tell you about their day try asking some questions to prompt your child and show them that you are interested. Be careful not to bombard them with questions as this may make your child feel overwhelmed.

Questions

What did you enjoy most about today?
How did that make you feel?
Who did you see/talk to/play with?
What did you learn at school?

18. Help hand the washing out.



The washing is done, the sun is shining and now it's time to hang it out. Your child could help you do this.

Squeezing the pegs will help develop the muscles in their hands that they use to hold a pencil and use scissors.

It is an ideal time to practise identifying colours, patterns and sizes. Ask your child to pass you the spotty socks/purple socks. shorts/ big t-shirt.

19. Copy a pattern.



Start by making a pattern for your child to copy. Once they have mastered this, create a pattern for them to continue or see if they can create their own for you to copy.

Make a pattern with their toys (blue car, blue car, red car, blue car, blue car)

Make a movement pattern (jump, step, jump, step)

Make a sound pattern (bang, tap, tap, band, tap, tap)

20. Play throw and catch.

Throwing and catching involved many skills for your child to master.

Starting with rolling a ball to each other will help develop their ability to track a moving object, aim the ball in the correct direction and position their hands correctly to catch the returning ball.

Another way to build their skills is to use a balloon or a scarf. These items move and fall much slower than a ball which gives your child a chance to adjust their position.



You will need

Ball
Balloon
Beanbag
Scarf
Ball of paper

When your child is throwing encourage them to throw underarm as this will give the most control over the ball.

Top tips for your child.

Look in the direction you are throwing
Have your arms ready in front of you
Keep your eyes on the ball
Use two hand to throw and catch

21. Sing a nursery rhyme.

Nursery rhymes provide a great start to learning early phonic skills such as, the ability to hear and identify letter sounds. They also give your child the opportunity to practise pitch, volume and rhythm. Nursery Rhymes can be enjoyed anytime and anywhere. Encourage your child to add actions to they rhyme, change names/ words to personalise them or clap along to the beat.

Nursery rhymes can be easily found online.



22. Recognize your Name

Being able to recognise their own name will aid your child's self esteem and help them find their belongings when they are at school.



Roll out their name in play dough.
Label their belongings with name labels.
Write their name in glue for them to stick onto.
Write their name on paper with a candle for your child to paint over with watered down paint.
Make a name sign together for your child to stick on their bedroom door.

23. Have fun in the bath.

Bath games make bath time a fun and enjoyable experience and offer educational opportunities.

Provide a range of different sized containers for your child to explore. Which holds the most/least water?

Explore what happens when you hold a bottle under the water. Talk about where the bubbles are coming from.

Use toys and objects in the bath to talk about floating and sinking. Which float and which sink?
Spread shaving foam on the side of the bath. Your child can use their finger to draw pictures, shapes and try writing letters.

Bath time can also be a great time to read your child a story.



You might need

Different sized containers

Bottle

Sponges

Bath toys

Shaving foam

Books

Vocabulary

Pour, tip, sprinkle, splash, more, less, big, small, full, empty, drop

24. Play shops.

Children take a lot of pleasure in recreating adult roles and routines.

Imaginary play is an important part of child development. Role play encourages children to positively interact with peers and adults.

During this type of play your child will copy and practise words they hear you use which will develop their vocabulary and language.



You will need

Items to buy
(food, toys,
books)

Money

Shopping Bags

Questions

How much does this cost?

Do you have...?

Where can I find...?

Vocabulary

Money, coins, notes, cards, bags, customers, till, bags, shop keeper, closed, open.

25. Make a picture.



You will need

Paper

Pencils

Crayons

Drawing and creating pictures encourages children to be more expressive.

Children absorb everything they see, hear, smell or touch. Creating a picture is a great way for them to express their experience and understanding.

Drawing develops your child's problem solving skills, enhances their fine motor control and hand-eye coordination.

- Collect leaves, pine needles, sticks, stones and arrange them on the ground to create a picture.
- Take home the items you find and create a picture by sticking them on paper.
- Take a sketch pad and pencils outside and make observational drawings.
- Draw plans for other activities such as; den building and potion making.

26. Make a model.

Vocabulary

Next to, on top, side, shape, size, join, add, stick, cut

Bigger, smaller, same, equal, tall, short



Models can be made anywhere and with anything. The important part of model making for your child's learning is the process of the planning and making rather than what the outcome looks like.

Model making promotes the development of skills such as planning, organising, problem solving and logical thinking.

Talk to your child while they are model making about what they are making and how they are making it.

Some children may like to spend time planning their model by drawing a design first.

You will need

Cardboard boxes, cardboard tubes, paper, sticky tape, glue, scissors

Construction sets- duplo, lego, blocks. Bricks

Stones, sticks leaves

27. Go for a walk.

Walking is a fantastic activity for you and your child. It's fun, interesting and gives your child time to notice things.

The exercise makes them feel calmer and happier. It also improves concentration.

Take a walk with your child and try to pinpoint different sounds that you hear. The route and destination are not important, your child will benefit from spending time observing their surroundings and talking about them.



You will need

Somewhere to walk (park, street, woodlands)

Time

Questions

What do you think is making that noise?
Which noises do you like/dislike?
How many different noises can you make?

Vocabulary

Hear, listen, sound, noise, loud, quiet, rustle, tweet, creak

28. Tidy up.



Looking after your own belongings is an important skill, so tidying up together at home will teach your child to take responsibility for their belongings when they start school.

A variety of skills are taught and practised during this activity.

Memory and recall skills are used when children have to remember where their toys belong.

Observational skills are developed by sorting and matching similar toys to put them away together.

Putting their own toys away and knowing where they are gives them a reason to keep them tidy and promotes **independence**.

Make tidy up time into a game by using a timer or setting a challenge.

'Can you fill your box before I fill mine?'

'How many toys can you put away in 1 minute?'

Using music or a particular song to tidy up to can make the activity more fun and give your child a limited time to complete the task.

29. Share a book.

Spending just 10 minutes a day reading with your child can make a big difference to their development. Being read to frequently as a young child also promotes a love of reading.



Ask questions every so often to find out what they think might happen next.
Recap what has happened every few pages to make sure that your child knows what's happening.
Encourage your child to hold books and turn the pages.
Remember to use the pictures to help your child's understanding of the story.
Teach your child how to care for books.

When you ask your child a question, give them plenty of time to respond.

Questions

What do you think might happen next?
How do you think the character is feeling?
What was your favourite part of the story?

Vocabulary

Title, page, character, setting story

30. Lift up a rock.

Children are naturally very inquisitive about the world around them.

When you are playing in the garden, woodlands or the park try lifting a log or a rock for your child to explore the world beneath it.

You can print a fantastic bug hunt sheet off from the Woodland Trust website.

Remember

Leave the creatures where you found them.

Wash your hands



You will need

Rocks

Logs

You might like

Magnifying glass

Bug hunt sheet

Questions

How does the bug move?

What does the bug look like?

Why do you think it lives under here?

Vocabulary

Habitat, dark, damp, legs, feelers, wriggly, shiny, crawl, slow, fast, wings, slippery, delicate, tiny, hairy, smooth.



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