

Ready, Steady, Reception!



Welcome!

Starting school is an exciting next step! We have chosen seven of our 50 Things to Do Before You're Five activities for you and your child to enjoy over the summer, to support a confident start to school.

How to use...

- Enjoy the seven activities together.
- Keep it playful and relaxed.
- Choose when and how often to do them, repeat anytime!
- Celebrate effort and achievements.
- When your child starts school in September, share what you have done.

Next steps...

- Explore the 50 Things to Do initiative to find out about other activities that you can enjoy together.
- Explore the 'events' tab on 50 Things to Do, to find low or no-cost events in your local area.

50 Things to Do Before You're Five

50 Things to Do Before You're Five is a playful list of simple, fun, and meaningful activities to share with your child, helping them explore, learn, and enjoy early childhood.

You may have seen '50 Things to Do' posters, cards or even taken place in activities hosted at local events, when you have been out and about.



If you download the app or access the translatable website, you can explore other low and no-cost activities and events locally, whilst marking off all of the activities you do as you go along!



Scan the QR code to access the 50 Things To Do Before You're Five initiative via the translatable website, or free app!



#10 Sharing Books

Stories are part of everyday life, not just books.

You do not need a book to share a story with your child, you can talk about your day or make up a story together. Sharing stories helps children learn to listen, build language, and talk about ideas and events, which supports their learning when they start school.

Ways to try:

- Share a story with your child every day, even for a few minutes. This could be reading together or making up a story about your day. Turning off the TV and phones can help you focus and enjoy the time together. You can share stories anywhere.
- Do not worry if you are not a confident reader – you do not need to read every word. Talk about the pictures, follow your child's interests, and make up parts of the story.
- Visiting the library can be a lovely way to share stories. Your child can borrow up to 12 books every three weeks. Children often see new books advertised at the end of the ones they read, and these can be reserved online through the library website.



Scan the QR code to find
your local library.



How it supports a confident start to school:

- Listening to stories helps children learn to listen, talk about ideas, develop their imagination, and share their thoughts.
- Making up stories together builds confidence in speaking.
- Sharing stories and books helps children learn new words and supports their language development, helping them to develop skills for reading.



Helpful words and phrases:

- First, next, in the end, word, letter, author, illustrator, book, story, picture, page, beginning, middle, end, characters, feelings.
- I can see...
- I wonder...
- What if...?
- What can you see in this picture?
- What might happen next...
- Who is your favourite character? Why?
- How do you think they are feeling?

Our favourite moment...

You could draw your favourite moment here.

You can also tick it off as complete, on the app or in the star below.

#10 Sharing books



#16 Just Outside Your Door

Exploring your local community gives children a sense of belonging and familiarity. Walking the route to their new school several times before they start, helps build their confidence, as the daily journey becomes familiar even if the school itself is still new. Becoming comfortable with the route supports a smoother and more reassuring move into school.

Ways to try:

- Walk, cycle, or drive the route to your child's new school and help them notice key landmarks along the way.
- These might include buildings such as, shops or a community centre, as well as interesting features like beautiful gardens or eye-catching signs. This helps them become familiar with the journey, whilst noticing that print in the environment, carries meaning.
- Talk to your child about the upcoming change and explain that this will be their journey to school each day. Discuss who will take them, what the routine will be, and who their teacher will be, to help the experience feel predictable and reassuring.



Scan the QR code to find key skills to practice, to make your child's journey to reception, as positive as possible.



How it supports a confident start to school:

- Talking about change helps make it feel less daunting for your child.
- Giving them several weeks to think about and prepare for this transition allows them time to work through any worries or questions they may have.
- By taking one new element, the journey to school, and turning it into a fun and familiar experience, you help your child understand that this change is not something to fear, but something exciting to look forward to.



Helpful words and phrases:

- Look/notice, familiar/familiarity, route/journey, change, community, building/landmark, observe/spot.
- What can you see on our journey today?
- This is the route we'll take every day.
- I can see a.../I notice a...
- Let's see what's the same and what's different today.

Our favourite moment...

You could draw your favourite moment here.

You can also tick it off as complete, on the app or in the star below.

#16 Just Outside your door



#19 Growing Little People, Plants and Things

As your child moves into Reception, they will experience many changes. Learning about plant growth helps them understand that change takes time, and supports the development of patience, an important skill for starting school.

Ways to try:

- Help your child place cress seeds on folded kitchen roll in a pot or plate, add water, and choose a good place for them to grow.
- As you set it up, chat about what plants need in order to grow – things like light, water, and care.
- You can link this to what your child needs to grow too: food, water, warmth, love, and learning new skills.
- Use the activity to explore waiting and patience, measuring growth over time and talking about other times when waiting is needed.



Scan the QR code to explore your local Child and Family Centre's events and activities, to enjoy together.



How it supports a confident start to school:

- Growing seeds together helps children understand that some things take time, care, and patience, which are important skills they will use every day in Reception.
- Waiting for the cress to grow gives them real experience of taking turns, coping with waiting, and understanding that not everything happens immediately.
- Talking about what plants need to grow also helps children make sense of change over time and builds their early understanding of the world around them.



Helpful words and phrases:

- Grow/growing, change, seeds, light, water, time, patience/wait, compare, measure, height/high.
- What do you think the seeds will need to help them grow?
- They look like they have changed!
- Can you think of other times when you have to wait?
- I have to wait sometimes too – waiting is something everyone has to practise.
- Just like the seeds need water and care, what do you need to help you grow and learn?



Our favourite moment...

You could draw your favourite moment here.

You can also tick it off as complete, on the app or in the star below.

#16 Growing



#20 Mini Artists

Allowing children to draw and make marks freely with materials that can be washed away or will naturally disappear helps reduce any worries they may have about “getting it wrong” or feeling like “I can’t do it.” This freedom builds their confidence and encourages them to experiment with mark making in many other ways.

Ways to try:

- Using chalk, encourage your child to make marks outside, helping them to understand that there is no right or wrong way to do this.
- You can join in alongside them, talking aloud about your own mark making, for example, describing how a line crosses another or how you create a shape.
- As you do this, introduce simple directional words such as up, down, left, right, round, and straight.
- This activity can also be done using a bucket of water and a paintbrush. If your child finds larger movements easier, a broom or mop can be used for water painting, or children may enjoy using a thinner brush or a cotton wool bud to make more detailed marks.
- Throughout the activity, encourage freedom and creativity, and invite your child to talk about the marks they have made.



**Families
Information
Service**

Scan the QR code to explore local childcare options, and the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) local offer.



How it supports a confident start to school:

- Making marks and using tools takes time to learn.
- Big movements, like drawing on the floor or wall, help children build the control they need for writing later.
- Learning simple directional words also supports future letter formation.



Helpful words and phrases:

- Mark, marks, draw/drawing, line, shape, pattern.
- Directional language: up, down, left, right, across, around, over, under, straight, curved/curve, diagonal, backwards/forwards.
- Tell me about the marks you've made.
- You're really exploring with your marks.
- What would you like to try next?
- Look, your line is going up... now it's going down.
- That is a straight line that you have made.

Our favourite moment...

You could draw your favourite moment here.

You can also tick it off as complete, on the app or in the star below.

#Mini artists



All About Me:



My name:

Where I enjoy playing:

For example, do you go to a nursery, a playgroup, a childminder, or stay at home.

My favourite thing to do:

A skill I am still practicing:

Talk with your child about practicing difficult skills, to improve. Talk about what they found difficult in the past, but can now do, for example, dressing themselves.

My favourite place:

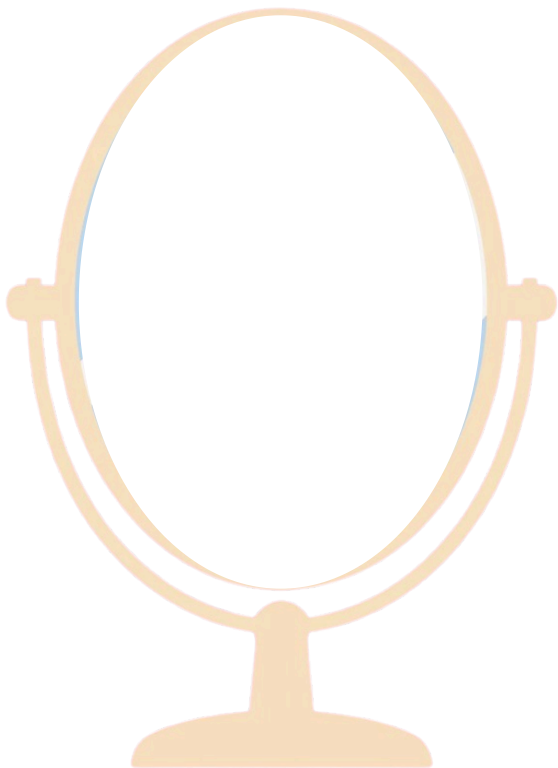
For example, the local park, a relatives home, their bedroom, the garden.

Portrait of me

Look in a mirror and draw your face in the frame below.

I can see different shapes!

I wonder if you have included your eyes, nose and mouth?



#20 Mini Artists

You can tick it off as complete on the app or in the star.



Supporting Your Child's Toileting



Learning to use the toilet is an important milestone for children before they start school. Do not worry if you are not there yet, summer is a great time to help your child be dry for school.

#15 Dressing up



- This activity is a great way to develop important independent skills which are helpful in your child's journey to become toilet trained.
- Dressing up, doesn't mean buying expensive fancy dress outfits. Have a look around your home for hats, scarves, jewellery or clothing belonging to you or their siblings perhaps.
- The act of putting on and taking off clothes can help develop fine motor skills too - this will later help with pencil grip.

Many children never show signs of being ready to use the toilet. The ERIC website includes lots of great advice on toilet training and can help you to know where to start.



Scan the QR code to explore the ERIC website.



Scan the QR code to NHS guide to toileting.

Tips to support

We understand that toilet training can be a difficult time for you and your child, so it is important to remain calm and to show your child that using the toilet is a completely natural and a positive learning process for them.

Here are a few tips to encourage your child and to help you make the process as supportive as possible when they are toilet training.

Practice sitting on the toilet before asking them to use it. First thing in the morning is a good time as they may need a post-sleep wee.



Dress them in easily accessible clothing, for example, jogging bottoms or loose fitting leggings.

When you are changing your child's nappy or pull up describe what you are doing, such as wiping, putting cream on.

Use lots of praise and encouragement, sitting on the toilet is a big achievement and should be celebrated.

Be prepared for accidents! Have plenty pairs of clean pants and spare clothes with you each day.



#36 Ready Steady Blow

Teaching children simple ways to feel calm, when they are experiencing different emotions, can make a real difference.

This activity helps your child learn how slow, steady breathing can help their body relax and feel more in control.

Ways to try:

- Show your child how breathing feels by noticing their breath, especially after being active.
- Use bubbles to practise slow, steady breathing and explain that this can help calm big emotions, even by pretending to blow bubbles.
- They can also try blowing dandelions, feathers, or objects in water.
- If bubbles are tricky, make a simple bubble sock to practise blowing. Cut the end off a plastic drinks bottle, pull a sock or tights over the open end, and secure it with an elastic band or tape.
- Make a mixture of a little water and some washing-up liquid, dip the sock end into the mixture, then blow to create long streams of bubbles. You can even scoop up the bubble "snake," hold it in your hand, and encourage your child to blow the bubbles off your palm.

Scan the QR code to explore our free, online courses for parents and carers.



TOGETHERNESS
Bringing the Solihull Approach to the world

How it supports a confident start to school:

- Teaching children simple strategies to help them calm down when they experience big emotions is really important.
- This skill is called self-regulation, and it can be challenging to learn.
- Even adults sometimes find it hard to manage their feelings.
- Activities like slow breathing and mindfulness give children practical tools they can use whenever they start to feel overwhelmed.



Helpful words and phrases:

- Calm, slow, steady, deep breath, inhale/breathe in, exhale/breathe out.
- Let's take a slow, quiet breath together.
- Let's see if a slow breath makes a bigger bubble.
- Breathe in and blow out slowly like you're making bubbles.
- Your feelings are big right now. Let's try our bubble breathing to help your body calm down.
- What does your body feel like after you take slow breaths?
- Can you feel your chest moving when you breathe?

Our favourite moment...

You could draw your favourite moment here.

You can also tick it off as complete, on the app or in the star below.

#36 Ready, Steady, Blow



#37 Postie

Giving meaning to marks is extremely powerful because it shows children that they are communicating. At a time when they may not often see adults writing for a real purpose, this activity helps them understand that marks can carry meaning and that there is an important reason for writing and mark making.

Ways to try:

- Encourage your child to make a letter for their new school about themselves, their summer, or any questions they have.
- They will be mark making rather than writing words, so ask them to explain what their marks say and you could write their message underneath for them.
- Use the envelope provided and travel to the school to post the letter. You can extend this by making letters or notes for family and friends.
- Encourage them to have a go and celebrate their efforts.
- For this activity, avoid teaching letter formation or changing their grip, so the focus stays on confidence and communication.
- Try modelling everyday writing on paper instead of a phone, such as a shopping list or note, and let your child watch to see that writing has a purpose.



Scan the QR code to explore resources that focus on supporting communication and language development.



How it supports a confident start to school:

- This activity helps children see that their marks have meaning.
- Watching adults write shows them that writing is useful.
- Having a go builds confidence, while posting a letter encourages independence and a positive link with their new school.



Helpful words and phrases:

- Mark/marks, letter/post/envelope, message/meaning, write/writing, send, deliver.
- Your marks are your message. Tell me what it says.
- I'm writing this list because it helps me remember things.
- What would you like to say to your new teacher?
- Let's take your letter to the postbox/school to deliver it.
- You had a go. That's brilliant!

Our favourite moment...

You could draw your favourite moment here.

You can also tick it off as complete, on the app or in the star below.

#37 Postie



#45 Wonderful waiting games

Waiting is a very difficult skill to learn. Teaching your child games and activities that you can play while you wait, not only teaches them the skill of waiting, but helps to develop their turn taking skills and the skill of accepting that someone else might win.

Playing games builds relationships between you and your child, and provides ideas for them to pass time.

Ways to try:

There are lots of simple games you can play with your child while you are waiting. These games help pass the time and build important skills like turn-taking, listening, and patience.

Here are some ideas to try:

I Spy

A classic observation game. Look for something everyone can see and describe it with a clue, such as "I spy... something big and blue."

Copy That Sound

Make a simple sound and ask your child to repeat it – animal noises, claps, beeps, or humming. As they get better, make the sounds longer or more complicated for them to copy.

Would You Rather?

Share funny, silly scenarios: "Would you rather hop like a frog or roar like a lion?" Children love choosing and explaining their answers!

Noughts and Crosses

Draw a 3 × 3 grid, take turns filling the squares with either X or O. The first person to get three in a row, across, down or diagonally, wins.

More ways to try:

Silly Nursery Rhyme Time

Sing a well-known song or nursery rhyme, but change one word to something silly. Pause and see if your child can spot the mistake!

What's Missing?

Place four to five small items on a table or surface. Ask your child to close their eyes whilst you remove an item, and see if they can guess which one has gone.

Mouth It

Mouth a short three-word sentence silently (no sound), for example, "I love you." Everyone watching gets one guess. Keep it to three words to make the game manageable and fun.

Dot Game (Capture the Squares)

Draw a grid of dots on paper. Take turns drawing one straight line between two dots. Whoever completes a square writes their initial inside. Count the squares at the end to find the winner.



Explore our multi-lingual nursery rhyme bank.



How it supports a confident start to school:

- Playing waiting games helps children build key skills such as patience and turn taking, which are important for everyday life, and in Reception.
- Many of the games also encourage language development, memory and attention, helping children to practise following instructions and concentrating for longer periods.



Helpful words and phrases:

- Wait/waiting, turn/my turn/your turn, patience/patient, listen/listening, winner, try again.
- Waiting can be hard, but games help the time go quicker.
- It's your turn now. I'll have a turn next.
- It's okay to feel disappointed. Losing can be hard.
- You tried your best, and that's what matters.
- Shall we play again and see what happens this time?
- I'm proud of how you kept going, even when it felt tricky.
- Thank you for waiting so patiently.

Our favourite moment...

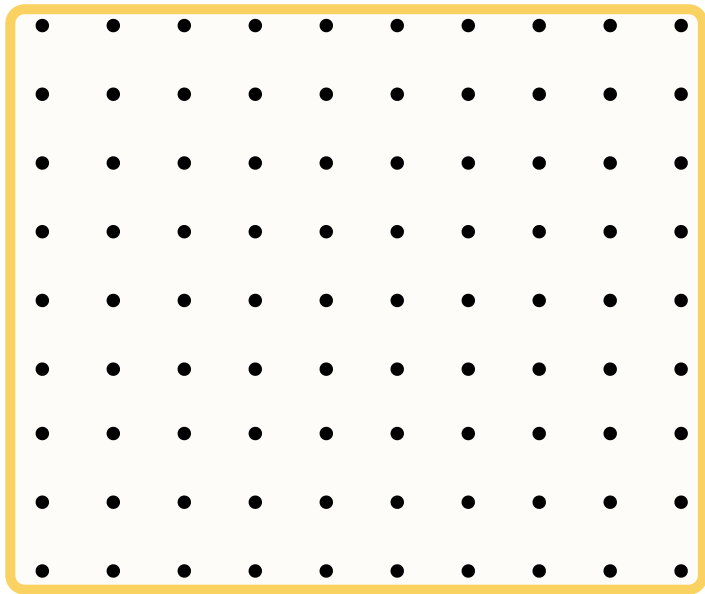
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#45 Wonderful waiting games

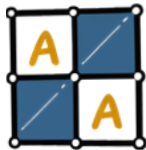


Time to Play...



How to Play:

1. Take turns drawing lines, joining two dots.
2. Complete a square, add your initial.
3. Count the squares at the end to find the winner.



A gets a square and another turn!

#45 Wonderful Waiting Games



Amazing!

We hope you have enjoyed practising lots of different skills, that will support you starting Reception!

Helpful links

Useful websites to support you and your child on their journey to school:



[Starting Reception booklet.](#)



[Best Start in Life: Preparing for school.](#)

Recommended Books on 'Starting School'

Why not reserve some of these books for free at your local library?

Starting School by Allan Ahlberg and Janet Ahlberg.

I Am Absolutely Too Small for School by Lauren Child.

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst.

Wise Before Five: Amazing things to know before you start school by Ekaterina Trukhan.

Topsy and Tim: Start School by Jean Adamson.

"These everyday moments shape their tomorrow"



Cambridgeshire
County Council



early years childcare and
school readiness service