

NSW Department of Education

Getting ready for preschool



pre
school



What you'll find inside this booklet

This booklet will help you and your child get ready for their preschool education.

It will also highlight the many benefits of sending your child to an early childhood education and care service that offers a preschool program.



Scan the QR code to [access this guide online](#) and explore other helpful resources

Did you know?

What happens during the start of your child's life (pregnancy until their 5th birthday) has a huge impact on how they grow, develop and learn. By attending a preschool program your child will learn valuable skills that support language and literacy development, social and emotional skills, creativity, confidence and motor skills.

We acknowledge the homelands of all Aboriginal people and pay our respect to Country.

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What is a preschool program

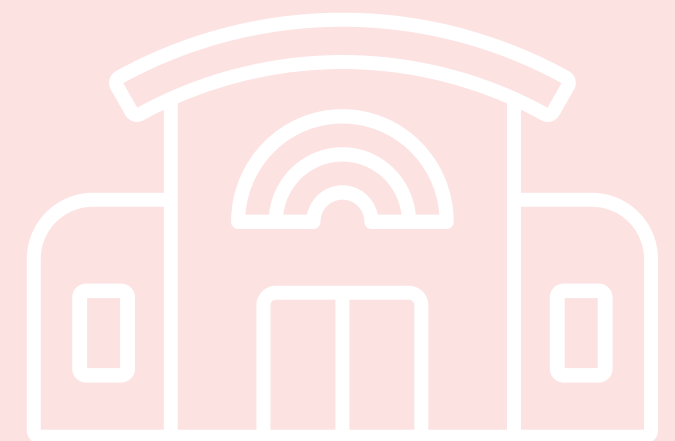
Preschool programs are usually for children aged 3 to 5 years, or the 2 years before they start primary school. They support children’s learning and development through play-based activities and help your child to become more independent, make new friends and get ready to start school.

Preschool programs are delivered in a variety of early childhood education and care services:

- Community-based preschools
- Long day care services
- Mobile preschools
- Family day care services
- NSW Department of Education preschools

Depending on the service your child attends, you may find the following people working there:

- **Centre Director** – manages the day-to-day operations of centre based services.
- **Early childhood teachers** – work directly with children and are degree-qualified.
- **Early childhood educators** – work directly with children and hold, or are studying for, an approved Certificate III or Diploma.
- **Support staff** – support children with additional needs.
- **Administration staff** – support with administrative tasks at the service.



Choosing a service

Choosing the right service that offers a preschool program is an exciting decision and great for your child's learning and development outcomes. It's important to research the different options available to determine which service will best meet the needs of you and your child.

Things to consider

- a service's quality rating
- your child's age
- the times and days your child needs education and care
- location – e.g. close to home, work or a family member's home
- your religious and cultural requirements
- any health care or additional needs.

Visiting services is a great way to find more information about what you can expect and is an opportunity to:

- ask the educators how they plan for and meet the individual needs of each child
- observe the children and educators and what they're doing
- see the environment and consider if it's inviting and if there are stimulating experiences available
- take your child, if possible, to see how they respond to the service.

How to find a service with a quality preschool program

Use the early childhood education finder to locate services offering a preschool program by entering an address and then selecting 'preschool' or 'mobile service' to see a list of services.

The finder also provides reliable and family-friendly information about quality ratings and the National Quality Standard.

finder.service.nsw.gov.au/ecec

Understanding quality

All approved services in NSW are assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard which sets a high benchmark for the quality of all services across Australia.

In NSW, a service's quality rating is displayed on a certificate using a star graphic. The certificate must be visible at the service and gives families important information about the overall rating of a service, as well as a rating against each of the quality areas.



education.nsw.gov.au/choosing-a-service

Did you know?

All services must follow safe sleep practices to ensure children are safe, healthy and protected from risks associated with sleep and rest. Your service will be able to provide you with a copy of their safe sleep and rest policy so you can find out more.





Getting prepared for preschool

Your child may display behaviours or feelings that show they are nervous about their first day. Visiting the service and getting to know the educators is a good way to prepare your child so they can become familiar with the environment and new routines. Speak to the educators to find out more.

Talking about the service in a positive way and reading books about starting preschool are other great ways to help your child feel safe and excited.



Download the starting preschool social stories to make a story about your child's service (available in 15 languages).

What your child needs

- a bag
- a lunch box and food unless your service provides meals
- a drink bottle
- a change of clothes, including socks and underwear
- a hat
- a sheet and/or blanket for rest time.

Comfortable clothes

Dress your child in comfortable, practical clothes that are safe and easy for them to manage on their own, including shoes they can play and climb in.

While educators try to avoid children staining their clothes, paint and dirt are all part of having fun and learning!

Children will be expected to wear a hat to play outdoors. SunSmart recommends children wear a broad-brim, bucket or legionnaire hat that shades the face, neck, eyes and ears. Encourage your child to get used to wearing a hat when they are outside.

www.sunsmart.com.au

Allergies, health conditions and additional needs

Before your child starts, it's important to let the educators know if your child has any allergies, health conditions, disability or any additional learning and support needs. This will give the educators time to make any necessary arrangements for your child.

Anaphylaxis is a severe and sudden allergic reaction to certain allergens, such as nuts, shellfish, or insect bites. You must let the educators know if your child is allergic to foods or is at risk of anaphylaxis.

allergyfacts.org.au

Label everything

Clearly label all your child's items such as their clothes, bag and drink bottle. However, for safety and privacy reasons make sure your child's name is not visible on the outside of anything they'll be wearing to and from their service.

Immunisations

Make sure your child's immunisation schedule is up to date. Your child cannot be enrolled unless they:

- are fully vaccinated for their age
- have a medical reason not to be vaccinated
- are on a recognised vaccination catch-up schedule.

Early intervention

You may know that your child needs extra help to develop new skills or has not yet met some of the milestones for their age.

There is help available to guide you through the process of assessing your child's developmental needs and you may want to find out more about early intervention.

Early intervention services are a form of specialised support for young children who have a disability or additional learning needs and their families.

If you aren't sure what kind of support your child might need, start by contacting a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) early childhood partner.



Scan the QR code to visit the NDIS website for more information.

Learning through play

Children learn through play. Let the educators know what your child likes to do at home, and what their favourite toys and games are. This will help the educators plan fun and engaging activities for your child that also teach them new skills.

The preschool program delivered in a service is guided by the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.

Examples of play

- Playing games with others.
- Learning about culture, community and family.
- Appreciation and care for the environment including sustainability practices.
- Moving the body and being active.
- Expressing self through painting, craft and collage.
- Listening to, making and moving to music.
- Learning about numbers, counting, measurement, patterns and shape.
- Listening to, making sense of and creating stories, songs and rhymes.
- Using senses to explore the environment including sand, clay, water and natural materials.
- Using tools and resources to be curious, investigate, construct and take apart.
- Imaginative play including role play, puppets, engaging with the natural world and making up games and stories.

Supporting your child's learning

Children learn best when families and educators work together. You know your child better than anyone else, so you can help the educator understand your child by sharing information about their interests, experiences and relationships at home.

Sharing information about your family's cultural background also helps educators create environments and experiences that make your child feel safe, secure and supported.

How to support your child

- Find out as much as you can about the service, such as the routines and what your child needs to bring.
- Ask about ways you can get involved in your child's service, such as sharing a skill or interest.
- Talk with educators about play-based learning activities you can do with your child at home.
- Talk with educators about your child's learning and raise any concerns or issues early, so you can work together to resolve them.
- Talk with your child each day about what they did.
- Connect with other parents and carers.



Meals at the service

Make sure your child has a nutritious breakfast at the start of the day, so they have energy to learn and play. Meal times are an important part of the daily program, as they promote healthy eating and support a variety of social skills.

Educators will also help your child during meal times, including support to develop healthy hygiene habits.

Some services will provide healthy meals and others will ask you to provide morning tea, lunch and perhaps afternoon tea. Talk to the educators about what to pack for your child each day, as there may be restrictions if some children have food allergies.

If your child has any allergies let the educators know before your child starts.

healthykids.nsw.gov.au

Lunchbox tip

Pack food that you know your child likes and will eat. Help your child learn how to unwrap their food and eat it on their own.

When your child is sick

If your child has the following symptoms then it's best to consult your doctor and keep your child at home:

- a fever of 38°C or above
- vomiting or diarrhoea
- cough or respiratory symptoms
- cold or flu symptoms
- rashes of an unknown origin.

Many services have a 48-hour quarantine policy for vomiting, diarrhoea and other infectious diseases. This means that if your child is sick, they may not be able to attend the service for at least 48 hours after their symptoms stop. For more information about the types of infectious diseases that may affect your child and how to reduce the spread of these diseases visit the NSW Health website.



Scan the QR code to find out more from NSW Health.

Getting ready for school

Your child's service will support you and your child in getting ready for school and starting Kindergarten classes. Services and schools often run a transition to school program, which will give you information about their first day in Kindergarten classes and help you understand the exciting things school life offers.

Services may also complete a 'Transition to School' statement for your child's new school and should seek your consent before completing the statement. The statement summarises your child's strengths, interests and ways they like to learn. This information helps Kindergarten teachers get to know the children entering their classrooms and plan appropriate learning and teaching programs.

In some communities, there are additional transition programs to enhance educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. To find out more about these programs, speak to your educators.


Schools also offer additional support for students who speak English as an additional language or dialect.

education.nsw.gov.au/starting-school-guides



Find out more

To find out more about going to NSW public schools, including student learning and wellbeing support, school life insights, and resources for parents and carers.



Scan the QR code to visit our parents and carers web page for more information.

When you have questions or concerns

You may have questions or concerns about your child while they are going to a service or when they are getting ready for school. If you would like to discuss your child's progress or readiness for school, your child's educator is often the best place to start.

If you have concerns about the service, you can ask to speak to the educator, service director or approved provider.

If the issue cannot be resolved by the service, you can contact the NSW Department of Education to make a complaint about a service, or the Department of Fair Trading if the complaint is about service fees or business practices.

education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-feedback



Phone the NSW Department of Education on 1800 619 113 or email ececd@det.nsw.edu.au for support.





Useful websites

education.nsw.gov.au/useful-websites



Early childhood education finder

service.nsw.gov.au/find-ecec-providers



Choosing a quality service

education.nsw.gov.au/choosing-a-service



Parents and carers resources

education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/information-for-parents-and-carers



education.nsw.gov.au/early-learning-resources



www.startingblocks.gov.au/other-resources/factsheets

raisingchildren.net.au

Translated school information

education.nsw.gov.au/translated-documents



Aboriginal education & communities

education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/aec



Allergies

allergyfacts.org.au

Immunisation

health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation

NSW Health

health.nsw.gov.au

Road safety

education.nsw.gov.au/safe-travel



Complaints, compliments and suggestions

education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-feedback



Website translations available

To download a digital copy of this booklet visit education.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/going-to-school/preparing/starting-preschool. If you have any questions about this booklet please call 1800 619 113 or email ececd@det.nsw.edu.au

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