

ELEVATE **E³**
EARLY EDUCATION

What parents
need to know...



...about helping
their child be
ready for school.



WELCOME!

You are your child's first and most important teacher. From the day they are born, the moments you share together are the building blocks for school success. This booklet is a step-by-step guide to arm you with tools and ideas to make sure you're giving your child a happy, healthy, and successful start in their first five years.

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E3: Elevate Early Education is a statewide advocacy movement created by business, civic and philanthropic leaders working to address the urgent need for increased public investment in early education for Virginia's children, birth to age five.

For additional information, please visit www.E3Va.org



BABY ESSENTIALS

Congratulations on the newest addition to your family! Your new baby is an exciting adventure though not without a few challenges and unknowns. With so much information out there, it's hard to know what's most important, so to help you out, we've narrowed down the top things you need to know to keep your baby happy, healthy and thriving.

(NEWBORN-1 MONTH)

Baby Care:

Crying happens—crying may be frustrating at times, but it's important to remember that it's your baby's way to communicate & let you know how they feel—whether they're hungry, wet, tired, or unhappy.

Here are a few tips to comfort your baby:

- Try meeting their basic needs like feeding, changing & burping.
- Swaddle or rock them.
- Go for a walk or a drive.
- Turn on noise with a humming sound like a fan or vacuum.
- Give the baby a warm bath.

Umbilical Cord Care—for the first few weeks, your baby's umbilical cord is still attached. This typically falls off within 2-3 weeks. It's important to let the process happen naturally, but until then, it requires a little care:

- Keep the area clean—methods vary, so ask your doctor what they suggest.
- Keep the area dry—allow the area to get air whenever possible to keep the base dry & speed up the healing time.
- No baths until the cord falls off—only give your baby sponge baths, making sure to keep the belly button area dry.



Health & Safety:

Never shake your baby—when trying to comfort your baby, remember to never shake them. If you're getting upset, put the baby in a safe place & take a moment to breathe.

Back is best—when it comes to sleeping, be sure to put your baby to sleep on their back to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

A few more tips for safe sleep include:

- Give your baby a firm sleep surface—a safety-approved crib mattress with a tight, fitted sheet.
- Keep the sleep area clear—put things like toys, bumpers & stuffed animals away from your baby's face while they sleep.
- It's okay to have your baby sleep near you, but be sure it's not with you.
- Don't smoke near your baby.
- Make sure your baby sleeps at a comfortable temperature & does not overheat—if you're comfortable, they're comfortable.

Buckle up—keep your baby safe while driving. Be sure your car seat is properly installed & that your baby rides facing the back of the car to support their back, neck & head in case of an accident.

Book your doctor—within the first few days, call your doctor's office to schedule your baby's first well-baby check-up. During this stage, you'll find your doctor will be a valuable resource to you—take advantage of the time with your doctor—write down questions ahead of time & be sure to ask them!

Parent Care:

Treat yourself—bringing a new life into the world is a lot of work; it's common for moms to feel sad, tired, crabby & emotional in the first few weeks. In addition to taking care of your baby, make sure you take care of yourself. After all, your baby needs you!

- Ask others for help—everyone needs a little help getting started!
- Don't overdo it—it's okay to say no to things & limit visitors & activity.
- Relax—read, take a bubble bath, watch a movie—give yourself time to unwind.
- Enjoy your baby—you may feel overwhelmed, but spend time enjoying your baby—hold them, rock them, talk to them & most importantly, love them!

(2-3 MONTHS)

Baby Care:

Tummy Time—when your baby is awake, put them on their stomach to strengthen their head, neck & shoulder muscles & reduce the chance of getting a flat head. Talk to your doctor about how long & how often tummy time should last—some doctors recommend 5-10 minutes several times a day. **Tip: tummy time shouldn't be torture—if your baby is crying, be sure to pick them up. The more practice they get, the easier it becomes!**

Health & Safety:

Keep Watch—your baby may be small, but it's important to remember to never leave them alone on the bed, couch, changing table, or in the bath tub.

Immunize—when your baby is 2 months, it's time to think about shots. Talk to your doctor about your options & see what they recommend.

Smoke Free—smoke is harmful to your new baby; keep your home & your car smoke free.

Nutrition:

Keep it quiet—whether you're breast feeding or bottle feeding, find a quiet place to feed your baby where you can both be comfortable & you won't be disturbed.

Development:

Read—get into a habit of reading books together every day. Board books with lots of pictures are a great option! Don't be alarmed if your baby chews or sucks on the book—it's just one way they explore.

Talk, talk, talk—your baby might not be able to talk yet, but your voice is soothing. Speak to them throughout the day & talk about the things you do together. Example: "We're putting your coat on because it's cold outside."

Parent Care:

Get outside—take time to get out of the house. Go on walks near your house with your baby—not only is it good exercise, but being outside & breathing fresh air is good for you.





(4-6 MONTHS)

Baby Care:

Get in a groove—if you haven't already done so, begin to set a regular routine for feeding & sleeping.

Health & Safety:

Keep Watch—your baby is moving & grabbing more every day. Be sure to keep small toys & food away from them to prevent choking.

Stay Connected—in case of an emergency, keep important numbers stored in your cell phone or nearby your home phone so you can quickly reach people like your doctor, family & poison control.

Nutrition:

Bottles—your baby is getting better control of their hands now, but be sure to continue to hold your baby when giving them a bottle. This can be great bonding time!

Solid food—now is the time to talk to your doctor about introducing solid food.

Development:

Peek-a-boo—play peek-a-boo with your baby—not only will they love the time you share together, but it's a simple way to teach cause & effect at an early age.

Play—have fun with toys! Put toys nearby or above your baby so they can reach for them, or place the toys in their hand.

Parent Care:

Ask—things might be getting easier as your baby gets older, but don't forget, it's always okay to ask. Ask for help from those around you & ask your doctor when you have any questions about your baby's health & growth.



Date night—ask a family member or friend to watch your baby while you & your partner enjoy some much-needed alone time. Go on a walk, out to eat, or stay home & watch a movie. Enjoy some baby-free time together to keep your relationship strong.

(7-9 MONTHS)

Baby Care:

Teething—by now, your baby is getting their first teeth. Make this process more comfortable by giving them something to chew on, like a teething ring or cold washcloth. Cold foods like applesauce may also be helpful.

Health & Safety:

On The Move—your baby is moving more & more each day, be sure your house is safe & ready. Put safety plugs into unused power outlets, keep electrical cords tucked away so they can't get them, block off stairs with a baby gate & make sure harmful items like cleaning supplies, medicine & breakables are locked up & out of reach.

Buckle Up—be sure when you're feeding your baby, that you always keep them buckled into their highchair so they won't fall out.

Nutrition:

Mix it up—your baby is learning to enjoy solid foods. Their tastes may change, so if they don't like something at first, it's okay to try it a few times—they may change their mind!

Development:

Catch—strengthen your baby's hand-eye coordination by rolling a ball back & forth on the floor.

Be Musical—while you're cooking dinner, put some type of music on & give them a pot & a wooden spoon to play with—sometimes the best toys are already in your house.

Talk, Talk, Talk—don't stop talking to your baby when you're together—say what you think your baby is feeling (sad, tired, happy) & describe what your baby sees (brown, furry dog; round, blue ball, etc.).

Parent Care:

Connect—take time to connect with other parents. Join a local mom's group, find a play group, or start a mom's night out—other parents with newborns can be a valuable support.

(10-12 MONTHS)

Baby Care:

Focus on the good—rather than only focus on the behaviors you don't want to see, be sure to praise the things your baby does that you do want to see. If they are doing something wrong, instead of spanking or yelling, help them find something else to do.

Health & Safety:

Pearly Whites—your baby may not have many teeth yet, but it's important to take care of their teeth & gums. After each meal, wipe their teeth & gums with a wet cloth. Also, now is the time for their first visit to the dentist. If you don't have a family dentist, ask your doctor for a recommendation.

Car Seat Check—if they haven't already, soon your baby will outgrow their infant car seat. Check the weight restrictions & be sure to upgrade to a bigger seat when needed.

Nutrition:

Keep it healthy—it's fun to explore new foods with your baby, but be sure you avoid foods that are high in sugar.

Stay hydrated—remember to keep you & your baby hydrated—drink lots of water, but never leave your baby in their crib with a bottle.

Development:

Stack it up—let your baby play with measuring cups, Tupperware, or toys that stack inside each other to practice stacking.

Keep on Reading—remember the importance of reading to your child. Go to the library & pick out a few books to enjoy together. Take time to let them explore & enjoy all the pictures.

Get creative—give your child blank paper & crayons & let them draw & create. Be sure to praise their finished product.

Parent Care:

Time for yourself—ask a family member or friend to watch your baby while you enjoy some much-needed alone time. Go on a walk, grab a cup of tea, or stay home & relax.





Get pampered—even with almost one year of parenting under your belt, remember to take some time for yourself. Take a break & enjoy a baby-free activity like a movie, a manicure, or coffee with a friend.

TODDLER TIME

Happy birthday, baby! Can you believe it's already been a year? Your baby is growing and changing every day and their brain is growing rapidly, too.

Did you know that nearly 90% of your baby's brain will be developed by the time they're 5?

To give your baby's brain a boost before they turn 2, here are some easy tips to make sure that your toddler is getting all the attention, love, and interaction they need.

(13-15 MONTHS)

- **Read, read, read**—we can't say it enough, read to your toddler! Let them hold the book and turn the pages as you read together.
- **Walk it out**—by now, your baby is probably learning to walk. Coach & encourage them to try to take a few steps, but be sure to keep your eye on them at all times as they begin to explore.
- **Speak up**—introduce your child to new words daily by talking to them throughout the day. Talk about the things you see, hear & do together.
- **Mirror, mirror**—play with your toddler in the mirror. Make silly faces together & talk about what you see—eyes, ears, nose, mouth, etc.
- **Build it up & tear it down**—build a tower together with a few blocks & then knock it down & start all over. This helps teach cause and effect & strengthens fine motor skills.



(16-18 MONTHS)

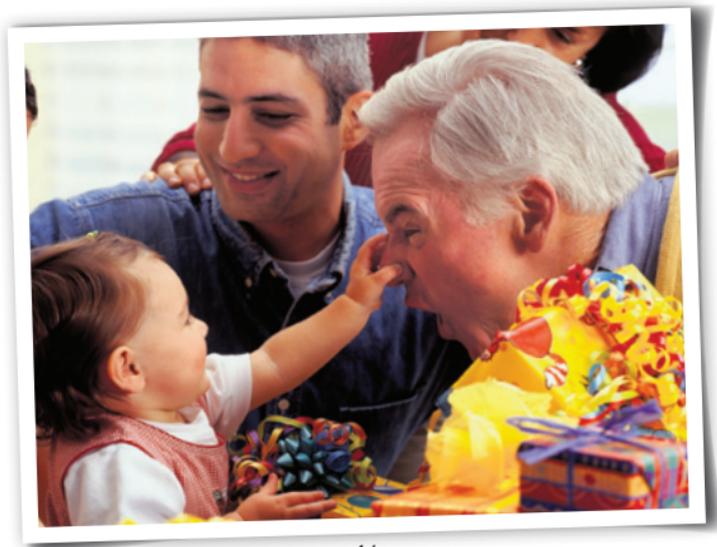
- **Talk back**—even if your baby isn't using words you can understand, be sure to talk back to them when they make sounds to encourage them to keep on talking.
- **Pretend**—give your baby items that you use daily like toy keys, dishes, or a telephone & let them practice pretending to use these everyday objects.
- **Dance**—put on some music and dance together—shake, rattle & roll!
- **Splish, Splash**—give your baby cups & other toys during bath time to let them explore & play with water.
- **Hide and Seek**—hide things like toys or stuffed animals around the room (under pillows, blankets, etc.) for your baby to find.

(19-21 MONTHS)

- **Family Band**—make your own music together with items found around the house—rice in a sealed container can quickly become a maraca, or a pot & a spoon become a drum.
- **Play Red Light, Green Light**—a fun game to get your child to move, follow directions & learn colors.
- **Ask questions**—as you continue to read together, be sure you're asking lots of questions about the pictures, the story & what they see.
- **Play Ball**—give your baby a ball and practice rolling, throwing & kicking together.
- **Play-Dough**—let your baby explore with play-dough and watch them mold, squeeze, shape & be creative. Make sure they don't try to eat it.

(22-24 MONTHS)

- **Follow The Leader**—let your child copy you as you crawl, run, jump & dance around the house.
- **Tell stories**—in addition to reading books, tell your child stories to encourage them to listen. A great place to tell stories is while you're driving in the car.
- **Finger paint**—have fun with finger paint and let your child create their own works of art. Ask them about what they made & give them lots of praise. Once it dries, hang it on the wall or refrigerator where they can take pride in their work.
- **Shape up**—draw some simple shapes (circle, square, triangle, etc.) and talk about them with your child. See if you can find shapes around your house—plates, windows, glasses, etc.
- **Help out**—give your child little jobs to help out around the house—putting toys away, dusting, helping you cook, etc.—this will let them feel helpful and needed.







QUALITY CHILD CARE CHECKLIST

Looking for quality child care? As a parent who wants what's best for their child, you're well aware that finding quality child care can be quite a challenge. Before deciding on a program, it's a good idea to visit a few places to find the right fit for your family. Be sure to do your homework!

Here are the top ten things to look for:

- Is the program licensed & a part of the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)?
- How many children is each teacher responsible for?
- How experienced & educated are the teachers in early childhood?
- Are there plenty of opportunities for playtime & interesting activities—places for reading, building with blocks, doing puzzles, clothes for dress up & outside play.
- Do teachers smile, talk, listen, read & play with children?
- Do teachers use calm voices & redirect children to other activities when there is conflict?
- Do children have the opportunity to be creative—paint, draw & use play-dough?
- Are meals & snacks healthy & well-balanced?
- Will my child have time to play outside—running, catching, throwing, etc.?
- Will my child have fun here & develop a love of learning?

Remember to talk to your child's teacher often for updates on how your child is doing and be sure you can visit anytime.

YOU CAN HELP ME BE READY!

Helping me get ready for kindergarten is one of the most important things you can do for me in my preschool years. So, where should you start?

Below are ten simple, everyday activities you can use to help me be ready for school:

- Talk with me about what we do together. We can talk about what we see while riding in the car, shopping for groceries, playing & taking a bath.
- Read, sing, dance & play with me.
- Help me use my imagination to make up stories & songs.
- Show me photos & tell me stories about my family & our traditions.
- Take me to the library—bring me lots of books & magazines with interesting pictures that we can talk about together.
- Say & sing nursery rhymes & play rhyming games with me.
- Let me paint, draw, color & make music.
- Help me count buttons, socks, coins, people, cars & anything else we can see.
- Let me help you cook, clean & work in the kitchen.
- Play outside with me—run, jump, & climb.

Keep in mind, being ready for school is a combination of age, growth, and experience. Each child develops at their own rate.



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3 three

There is one. Count the honey
There is two. Count the honey
There are three. Count the honey
There are four. Count the honey
There are five. Count the honey
There are six. Count the honey
There are seven. Count the honey
There are eight. Count the honey
There are nine. Count the honey
There are ten. Count the honey

KINDERGARTEN READINESS CHECKLIST

By the time your child is 4, it's time to think about kindergarten. You hear a lot about making sure your child arrives at kindergarten ready for school, but what exactly does a "ready kindergartner" look like? Look no further!

You'll know your child is ready if they can:

- Hold conversations, listen, ask & answer questions.
- Listen to & enjoy stories & nursery rhymes.
- Follow simple one-step directions, routines & express needs & wants using words.
- Name some familiar letters & shapes—play matching games using magnetic letters, shapes & blocks.
- Count five objects by touching each one.
- Name the colors in a box of eight crayons.
- Say their first & last name.
- Throw, bounce & catch a large ball.
- Build a tower with five blocks.
- Use pencils, crayons, paint brushes, markers & scissors for drawing on blank paper.

**Never underestimate the value of playing with your child—
it is time well spent and allows your child to create, explore,
share, negotiate, problem solve, resolve conflicts and
use their imagination.**

MAKING THE JUMP:

Successfully Moving From Preschool to Kindergarten

It's hard to believe your child is now approaching kindergarten! Remember when they were a newborn and you were just getting started? Believe it or not, it's time to start thinking about making the move to kindergarten!

We've given you ideas on how to help prepare your child for school, but what about all the other details? Here are a few simple tips for making the jump from preschool to kindergarten as easy as possible:



- **Don't delay**—make sure your child is registered for kindergarten as early as possible. Registration usually begins in the spring, so check with your school district to see how soon you can sign-up.
- **Take a tour**—call the school and look into setting up a time for you and your child to see the school and visit a kindergarten classroom.
- **Arrive healthy**—check with the school to make sure you know what checkups, immunizations, etc. are required before school starts and give yourself plenty of time to take care of everything.
- **Talk about it**—be sure you talk to your child about what they can expect when they start kindergarten so they can be as prepared as possible. Tell them what their day might look like, and let them know what will be expected of them—listening, following directions, sharing, being kind to their classmates, etc.
- **Read together**—continue reading aloud to your child each day. This will strengthen their listening and reading skills and prepare them for what they will learn in kindergarten.
- **Be responsible**—encourage your child to be responsible for their personal belongings and care. Practice putting on their coat and shoes; talk about putting things back where they belong after they use them; and remind them about the importance of washing their hands.
- **Sweet dreams**—make consistent and early bedtime a priority—sleep is key to successful learning.



In 2011, Smart Beginnings South Hampton Roads awarded a grant to Sentara Obici Hospital to implement a nurse-administered newborn and family screen, offer parent-building resources to all parents, and connect families to community programs.

The pilot is a joint-collaboration between Sentara Healthcare, the Suffolk Health Department, and the Obici Healthcare Foundation. Many thanks to each of them for their vision and expertise in assembling this guide!

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