

## Your Child And Kindergarten

Kindergarten is the first step in formal education. Most kindergartens are part of the local public-school or private school systems. A few are extensions of nursery schools, designed especially for 5-year-olds. In some localities, kindergarten attendance is mandated, though school attendance is not usually law until a child has reached the age of 6. Because of the proliferation of nursery-school and preschool programs, kindergarten has undergone a radical change from just a generation ago. Most children today arrive in kindergarten with some experience in a classroom, so this year is no longer viewed as the single, formal preparatory event for first grade. Because of that early exposure, the kindergarten curriculum is no longer focused on introducing social skills, though these remain an important part of the program. Academic skills, increasingly, are working their way into the kindergarten's day, leaving less time for the appropriate play that was once the essence of kindergarten.

Traditionally, reaching age 5 signaled readiness for kindergarten. In many areas, that has changed, and today parents need to learn about the kindergarten their child will attend before deciding when the time is right. To evaluate your child's readiness:

- Know the school's cutoff date. Traditionally that has been age 5 by a specific birth date, such as June 30, September 1, or December 31, of the year in which the child is to begin school. Children who turn 5 after the cutoff date have to wait until the following year to begin in such a publicly funded program. Some public and many private schools have earlier cutoffs, a few going so far as to exclude those who have not turned 6 by the start of kindergarten
- Look at the curriculum Traditional kindergarten emphasizes play and sets the stage for more academic learning by introducing letter recognition and early arithmetic concepts, such as simple addition Class seating is informal, with children gathered around shared tables. These are well-suited to children who are close to age 5 at the start of the year or who may turn 6 before the end of kindergarten.
- Consider the ages of the other children in the class Even a very mature 5-year-old will have difficulties in kindergarten if most of his classmates are 6. If the curriculum has been adjusted to meet the developmental needs of 6-year-olds rather than the traditional kindergarten age of 5, a 5-year-old would have additional pressures put on him. Likewise, a mature 6-year old might do better in a first grade class rather than spending a year in a traditional kindergarten class of mostly older Kindergartners.

Though exceptions certainly need to be made for maturity and other aspects of In areas where the entrance age for development, most kids do best with others kindergarten is closer to 6, the kindergarten curriculum itself may resemble what was once the first grade curriculum. In effect, these older kindergartners are offered a drawn-out first-grade curriculum, in which the academic skills once reserved for first grade are introduced in kindergarten. The academic kindergarten is generally not appropriate for 5-year-olds.

## About the Author

Spring Creek Toys offers [GeoSafari Laptop - Ages 3-7 Edition](#), [GeoSafari Motorized Solar System](#), [GeoSafari Phonics Lab](#).

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