

What Does *Ready for School* Mean?

When is your young child “ready” to start school? It depends on many things. In Maryland, a child is considered ready for school when he has the abilities and the knowledge to successfully *learn* in kindergarten.

The Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) helps parents, teachers, and early childhood providers to understand what children need to know and be able to do when they start school. It includes seven areas:

1. **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
Does your child get along with other people, show concern for others, and participate in group activities? Is your child curious? When facing a problem, does he keep trying? Is your child a risk-taker? Is she able to work independently on given tasks?
2. **LANGUAGE AND LITERACY:**
Does your child speak clearly, and listen to and understand others? Does she know the difference between written and non-written information? Does she understand stories that she has heard or read? Can she sequence events from a story? Can she retell a story?
3. **MATHEMATICAL THINKING:**
Is your child able to sort things by color or shape or other characteristics? Can she recognize patterns? Does he understand such ideas as “top”, “bottom”, “first”, “second”, etc.? Can she represent relationships between numbers by showing “more than” or “less than” or comparing groups of objects?
4. **SCIENTIFIC THINKING:**
Does your child explore and make guesses (predictions) based on things he observes? Does she understand cause and effect? Does he use all of his senses to gain information?
5. **SOCIAL STUDIES:**
Does your child use the word “I” to express knowledge about herself? Does she understand her role and the roles of others in the family and the community?
6. **THE ARTS:**
Does your child express himself by trying artistic activities? Does he understand different kinds of art (visual art, music, drama, etc)? Does he use different kinds of materials to make art? Does he look for new ideas?
7. **PHYSICAL WELL-BEING AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT:**
Does your child have the physical basics (food, clothing, shelter and regular health and dental care) so that she can focus and participate in school? Is she able to run, jump, play ball and climb stairs? Can he use scissors appropriately? Can he draw with a pencil?

Adapted from ParentTips, a monthly resource for parents with young children provided by the Ready at Five organization. Visit www.readyatfive.org for more information about school readiness.