Many parents wonder what their child should be doing to get ready for kindergarten. Here are some great ideas:

Some parents assume children should know their letters before kindergarten. Forcing children to learn their letters and sounds at age 3 and 4 will not necessarily guarantee that the children will maintain a two-year advantage on other students who only learn their letters and sounds in kindergarten. Many children can catch up to these early readers. By the end of first grade many late starters catch up and level off with the early starters. However, if children do show an interest in letters and sounds at age 3 and 4, then certainly play with the letters and have fun. Sing the ABC song in the car, do puzzles, play with the sponge letters in the tub, make the magnetic letters accessible on the refrigerator, and throw out some “hooks” for the letters during your play. For example, “D, that’s Daddy’s letter and Dawson’s letter!” “N is for Nana and O is Owen’s special letter.” “R is for Robot. Let’s pretend we are robots.”

Another critical factor of being ready for kindergarten is to teach your child social skills. Sharing, taking turns, asking for help when they need it, being polite and learning how to be a good friend. When you and your child are reading a book together, point out what a character did that was being a good friend. “Wow! That was so nice of Joe to share his truck with his friend.”

It’s also a good idea to give your child two step directions around the house. “Please go put your socks on and bring me a book you want to read.” They will need this skill in kindergarten to follow what the teacher asks them to do.

Learn more about what you can do to get them ready with a great video from the Minnesota Department of Education at youtu.be/iMo_VP7N_Tk. The University of Minnesota’s Extension Service also has a great tip sheet at bit.ly/UMReadyK.

Help your child get excited about kindergarten

Check out these books to read with your child about going to kindergarten:

- **Off to Kindergarten** by Tony Johnston
- **Kindergarten Rocks** by Katie Davis
- **Llama, Llama Misses Mama** by Ann Dewdney
- **Countdown to Kindergarten** by Alison McGhee

Check out these great Children First! events with your preschooler.

- **Santa Lights the Lights** at Central School on Friday, December 2 from 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm.
- **Family Craft Time - Christmas Ornaments** at Breaktime Craft Studio on Monday, December 5 at 5:00 pm or 6:30 pm.
- **Ho-Ho-Ho Country Christmas** at the Children’s Discovery Museum on December 10 from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm.

Children First! events are free. To learn more visit www.getlearning.org or call 218-327-5730.