



## IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS, REMEMBER THESE TOP TIPS FROM PARENTING NI...

 <p>Positive Parenting Top Tip</p>  <p><b>#1</b> Love your children, no matter what they do.</p> <p>Helpline: 0808 8010 722 parentingni.org</p>	 <p>Positive Parenting Top Tip</p>  <p><b>#2</b> Listen to your children.</p> <p>Helpline: 0808 8010 722 parentingni.org</p>	 <p>Positive Parenting Top Tip</p>  <p><b>#3</b> Praise your children.</p> <p>Helpline: 0808 8010 722 parentingni.org</p>	 <p>Positive Parenting Top Tip</p>  <p><b>#4</b> Expect the best from your children.</p> <p>Helpline: 0808 8010 722 parentingni.org</p>	 <p>Positive Parenting Top Tip</p>  <p><b>#5</b> Make them feel safe physically &amp; emotionally.</p> <p>Helpline: 0808 8010 722 parentingni.org</p>
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## WHAT IS 'SCHOOL READINESS'?

School readiness refers to whether a child is ready to make an easy and successful transition into primary school. While many people think of academics (e.g. writing their name, counting to 10, knowing colours) as the important school readiness skills, school readiness actually refers to a much broader range of skills. In addition to some academic basics, school readiness skills also include self care (independent toileting and opening lunch boxes), attention and concentration, physical skills (e.g. having the endurance to sit upright for an entire school day), emotional regulation, language skills and play and social skills.



## WHY ARE SCHOOL READINESS SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Without these basic skills already being established upon starting school, children can very quickly find themselves playing 'catch up.' Children who begin school with these building blocks (or foundation) skills in place, tend to progress more quickly than those who start school, only then to begin the process of developing school readiness.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO IMPROVE YOUR CHILD'S READINESS FOR SCHOOL?

- **Parenting expectations:** Increase your expectations of your child around self-care tasks such as dressing, toileting, eating, and getting ready to leave the house. Provide only verbal rather than physical 'help' to complete the tasks where possible.
- **Social skills:** Encourage your child to develop relationships with other (unfamiliar) children of a similar age, and arrange suitable 'play dates' for social interaction practice where the adults actively facilitate this play practice.
- **Books:** Expose your child to books to prepare them for literacy so they learn to sit through the entirety of a book.
- **Early preparation:** Start preparing your child for school by talking about expectations at school, appropriate behaviour, and regularly engaging in 'sit down' activities.

The next few pages give you lots of practical activities and ideas to build your child's foundations for learning and hence their school readiness. HAVE FUN!

## EMAIL US:

If you have any comments on the content of this newsletter or indeed any queries, please send an email to us at [riseni.nhsct@northerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:riseni.nhsct@northerntrust.hscni.net)



Wishing everyone a very happy summer!

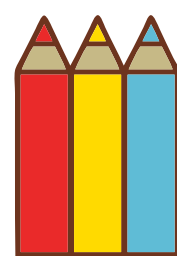






## LET'S GET READY FOR SCHOOL

Getting your child ready for P1 is a fun and exciting time. Children develop speech language and communication at different rates. During your child's P1 year they will be learning to:



- Understand spoken instructions, without stopping what they are doing.
  - Take turns in longer conversations.
  - Understand more complicated language e.g. first, last.
- Use sentences that are well formed. However, they may still have some difficulties with their grammar e.g. saying 'sheeps' for 'sheep' or 'goed' for 'went'.
- Use most speech sounds correctly so their speech should be mostly understood by both familiar and unfamiliar listeners.

(For further advice on speech and language ages and stages, visit [www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)).

## ACTIVITIES AND GAMES TO HELP GET YOUR CHILD READY FOR P1!

### LISTENING WALKS



Try out a listening walk e.g. in your home, back garden, local green area. Ask your child:

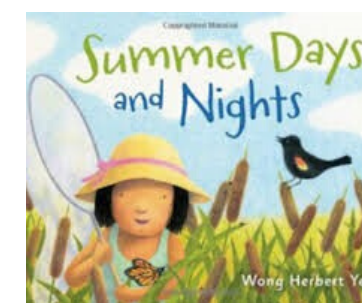
- What can you hear? Let's listen...
- Describe the noises and sounds you hear? Is it loud/quiet, long/short...

Listening for sounds and noises helps to develop attention and listening skills and encourages vocabulary.

Check out **Cbeebies sound adventures** and see what you can hear!  
[www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/andy-s-sound-adventures](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/andy-s-sound-adventures)

### SUMMER READING

Reading allows time to cuddle up together and enjoy books away from the daily distractions of TV and mobiles. Language learning is closely linked with reading and is one of the best ways to help get ready for school.



Top tips to help enjoy books together every day!:

- Encourage your child to choose books they enjoy. It's ok to hear the same story lots of times!
- Have fun making the animal noises in the book and different voices for the characters.
- Let your child retell the story and then talk about story e.g. what happened to baby bear's chair? I wonder how baby bear felt?
- Extend story time by acting out and dressing up.

Free access online:

- [www.librariesni.org.uk](http://www.librariesni.org.uk) sign up and download eBooks
- [www.booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk)
- [www.oxfordowl.co.uk](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk)



### WATER PLAY

Have fun with water. This can be done with a water tray or just a basin! Water play allows:



- Sensory play.
- Learning of concepts empty/full/heavy/light.
- Action words splash/squirt/pour, science - what floats or sinks?



Follow these simple **PLAY strategies**:

- **Follow your child's lead** - wait, watch, follow their lead and join in.
- **Face to face** - play at your child's level. Allow them to see your face, actions and feel connected to you.
- **Reduce your questions** - use comments instead. If you're about to ask a question, try turning it into a statement and say what you see. For example, instead of asking "What's swimming in the water?" you could say "Look! A big dinosaur is swimming in the water!"
- **Wait** - give your child time to do or say something. Try out the 10 second rule. Count to 10 in your head and allow your child to do something or say something that might surprise you!

### PICNIC TIME

Plan a picnic with your child. Name the things you have for the picnic e.g. basket, rug, ball, food. Talk about how you might use the objects e.g. rug to sit on. Comment: 'The juice is all gone; my cup is empty; there are no crisps left; the plate is empty' etc.



### BUILD A FORT

Decide what you are going to need: chairs, blankets, pillows etc. Building a fort together involves some planning! Where will we put the pillows? E.g. on the chair, beside the chair, or under the chair? Use language like first, then, next and last. Take it in turns being the leader and giving instructions - "go into the fort", "walk around the fort", "stand on one leg", "skip around the fort" etc.



# SENSORY MOTOR & PERCEPTUAL

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND PHYSIOTHERAPY

## GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Have a think about what your child's day will be like when they start school in September, and what sort of things they will have to do for themselves. They will have to put their coat on and take it off to hang it on a peg; they may have to change their shoes and jumper for PE; open and close their lunch boxes; go to the toilet by themselves; manage cutlery in the dinner hall; cut with scissors; hold a pencil to start to form letters and numbers; complete PE activities such as throwing and catching a ball; and remain settled in a chair or on the floor for longer periods. Being able to complete these basic every day activities will allow your child to focus more on the new learning and social challenges that the move to school will bring. These are activities that you can teach and practise with your child over the next few months to build up their confidence and readiness for school.



## ACTIVITIES TO HELP YOUR CHILD GET READY FOR SCHOOL



### SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S INDEPENDENCE SKILLS

One of the best things you can do to help your child get ready for school is to make sure they feel comfortable doing simple tasks by themselves:

- 1. Going to the toilet** – practise being able to clean themselves and getting their clothes fixed after toileting.
- 2. Getting dressed** – if possible practise this during the holidays when there are less time pressures. Teach your child that the school logo goes at the front when putting on their jumper. Practise fastenings e.g. zip on coat.



- 3. Putting on shoes** – practise getting the shoes on the right feet and managing the fastenings whether that's velcro straps or buckles.
- 4. Eating** – using a fork to eat their dinner, being able to open their lunchbox and everything in it e.g. yoghurt tubes.
- 5. Hanging up their coat** – this is something that your child should be encouraged to do by themselves.
- 6. Recognise their name** – this is something that will come with practise. Most schools have names on coat pegs and at the child's desk to ease confusion and keep track of their own belongings.

### GETTING READY TO CUT

Give them lots of opportunities to practise snipping / cutting  
– play dough sausages, straws, junk mail, magazines.



"Thumbs up!" - encourage them to put their thumb in the top and middle finger in the bottom.



Allow your child to practise using child safe scissors. They will be using these in school.

### GETTING READY TO STAY SETTLED IN SCHOOL

It's hard work for our muscles to stay in one position for a long period. To do this they need to be strengthened:  
- **Get to the park!** Climbing, running, swinging, sliding, jumping will all strengthen our big muscles we use for sitting.

- **Complete activities** e.g. jigsaws, colouring, construction games etc. **in positions other than sitting.** See the

pictures below to give you ideas.

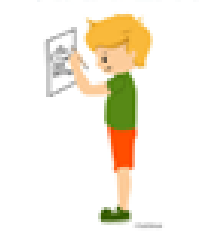
TALL KNEEL



ONE-HALF KNEEL



STANDING



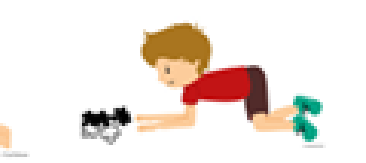
SIDELYING



PRONE



4 POINT KNEELING





## GETTING READY TO USE A PENCIL:

Children need strong shoulders, arms and hands to hold and use their pencil well. Try these activities to help get muscles stronger for school:



### BALLS AND PEGS:

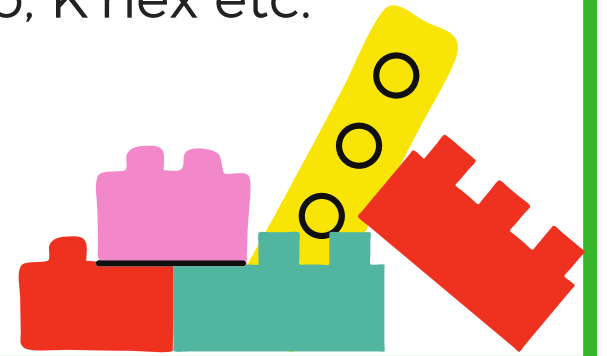


Have your child make little balls out of play dough, or spread some frozen peas on the table. Your child can pick them up, one at a time, using a clothes peg or tongs to put in a bowl.

www.wordunited.com

### CONSTRUCTION GAMES:

Any activity that your child has to use their two hands to build something is good for developing their hand strength and also their ability to use their two hands together. E.g. Duplo, Lego, K'nex etc.



### THREADING:



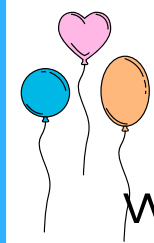
therapyfunzone.net

Practice threading some Cheerios onto a pipe cleaner!

### TENNIS BALL MONSTER:



kidabilities.com



### BALLOON BASKETBALL:

Put a bucket or a bin up high e.g. on a windowsill. Aiming high will strengthen shoulders.

### SPRAY BOTTLES:

Spray plants/ windows/ paper/ objects using a trigger spray bottle.



## MAKE YOUR OWN PLAY DOUGH

#### Ingredients:

- 2 cups plain flour
- 2 tablespoons veg oil
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
- Up to 1.5 cups boiling water (add in gradually until it feels just right)
- Food colouring (optional)
- A few drops of glycerine (optional)

#### Method:

- Mix the flour, salt, cream of tartar and oil in a large mixing bowl
- Add the food colouring to the boiling water; then add to the dry ingredients
- Stir continuously until it becomes a sticky, combined dough
- Add the glycerine
- Allow it to cool down then take it out of the bowl and knead vigorously for a couple of minutes until the stickiness is gone.

### PAPER TEARING:



www.happybrownhouse.com



momtastic.com

Use different textures and thickness of paper e.g. card, paper, tissue, magazines etc. to increase hand strength. The torn paper could be scrunched up to play "finger football" or to make a collage.



## LEARNING HOW TO WASH OUR HANDS



Use this helpful song from Therapies.org to help your child learn how to wash their hands by themselves!

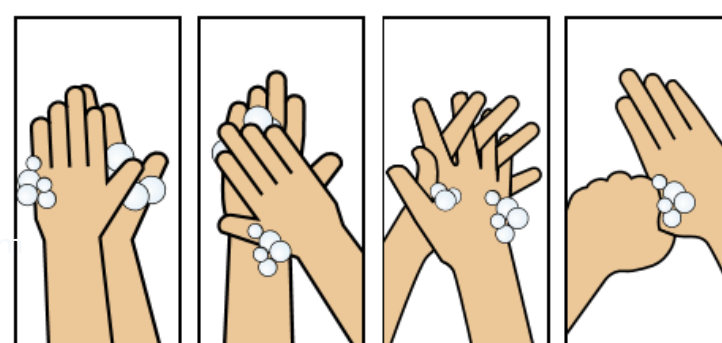
Sing to the tune of Row, row, row your boat (x3).



First I wet my hands, then I add some soap



now I'm going to make some bubbles rub and rub and rub.



Rub the front, rub the backs, between the fingers too, don't forget to rub your thumbs now you're ready to rinse.



Run the water over my hands, rub the bubbles away, all those germs go down the drain, now I'm clean again!







## WHAT IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT?



This area involves many aspects of development such as learning to interact with others and becoming aware of how to recognise and manage emotions. It may be said that emotional awareness is the foundation for emotional intelligence and development. Emotionally aware children find it easier to recognise how and why they are feeling a certain way. For many preschool children emotional awareness requires further nurturing and as both parents and teachers, we need to equip our children with the skills required to help understand their feelings, providing opportunities to explore feelings via different mediums.

## ACTIVITIES AND GAMES TO PROMOTE EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

### RELAXATION

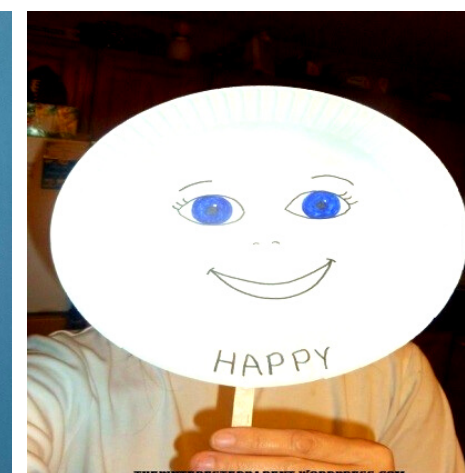
Relaxation exercises help children to manage their reactions to stress, anxiety and worry. Exercises, such as the ones below, are a good distraction from worrying thoughts and help reduce tension in the body. Ensure your child is in a quiet and comfortable position.



**Blowing bubbles:** Imagine you are blowing bubbles into the air. Take a deep breath in and as you breathe out blow the bubbles softly into the air. See how high and how far you can blow the bubbles. Watch the shimmering bubbles floating in the sky.

### EMOTIONAL CHECK-IN

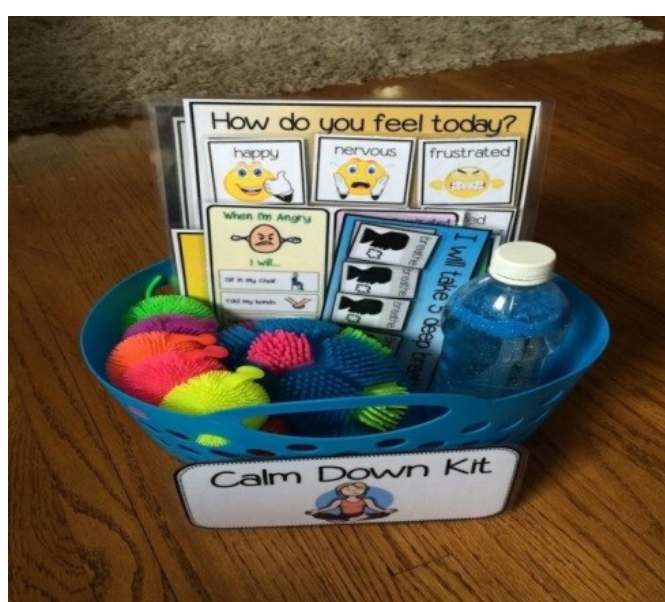
This is an opportunity for parents to 'check-in' with their children. A visual may be helpful with younger children, e.g. pictures of peoples' faces showing emotions, favourite TV characters, emojis etc. Your child could make their own feelings picture using paper plates to help identify how they are feeling!



### CREATE A CALM DOWN KIT

Alongside your child, you can make a simple aid which can be used when your child becomes dysregulated. With your child, you can identify strategies which may help at these times and simply put them or pictures of the strategy in a box or bag.

It may be helpful to name the box/bag 'My calm down kit'. Things to include may be a colouring book and pencils, a picture of a music note for listening to music, going for a walk, running around – pictures could be used for these. Counting to 10 – a counting strip may also be helpful to include.



### MAKE A WORRY BAG/BOX

- Ask your child to write or draw what their worry is.
- Drop their worry into the bag or box.



- The worry is left behind, the box will hold it for them.
- Sharing their worry can help make the worry smaller!

### READING WITH YOUR CHILD

Books are a great way of promoting discussion on feelings. Any story or book can be used to facilitate a conversation about feelings. Books are available with a specific emotional awareness theme such as Grumpy Gertie and Huge Bag of Worries.

Free e-book:  
<https://www.calameo.com/read/000777721945cfe5bb9cc?authid=Xu9pcOzU3TQx>

