

# Family Guides: Supporting Learning in the 2020-21 School Year

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Parents and caregivers have always wanted to know more about what their child is learning in school. After all, families are their child's first – and most important – teacher.

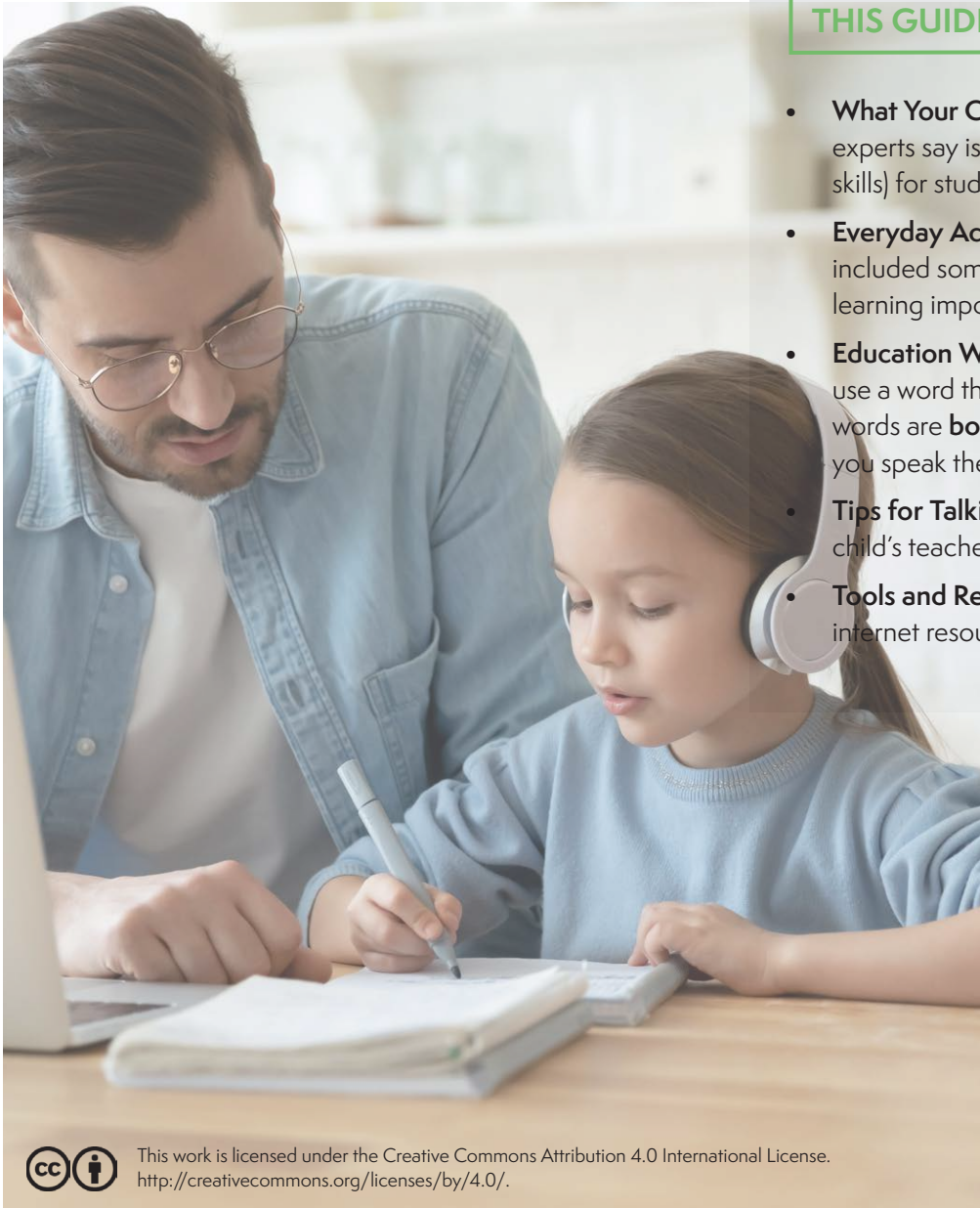
These days, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, children are often learning at home. It's a challenge for all of us. Parents, family members, grandparents, and other caregivers are all pitching in to help children learn. So we include all these people when we talk about how *families* can support kids.

This guide is meant to support families and students academically in literacy and math. Of course, students will be learning other subjects too, but literacy and math are the building blocks for everything else.

# GRADE K

## THIS GUIDE INCLUDES

- **What Your Child Should Know & Be Able to Do** – What experts say is the most important content (knowledge and skills) for students to learn by the end of kindergarten.
- **Everyday Activities to Support Learning** – We've included some ways you can support your child in learning important content and skills in literacy and math.
- **Education Words** – Sometimes, you'll hear educators use a word that has a specific meaning in schools. Those words are **bolded**. Understanding those terms will help you speak the same language.
- **Tips for Talking with Teachers** – How you and your child's teacher can work together to help your child grow.
- **Tools and Resources to Help** – We've chosen a few internet resources that best match each grade's content.



STUDENT  
ACHIEVEMENT  
PARTNERS



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# LITERACY

## WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO



Throughout the school year, kindergarten students will spend the most time working on the following topics. They should understand them well by the end of the year.

### Learning to read and write:

- Playing with language, rhyming, clapping out, or counting syllables. Identifying beginning, middle, and end sounds in spoken words (**phonemic/phonological awareness**).
- Naming all upper- and lower-case letters. Matching those letters with their sounds. Printing them clearly.
- Matching letters and sounds to sound out and write simple words. Focus on the most common consonant and short vowel sounds. (This may include **inventive spelling** for writing.)
- Reading and rereading **decodable** words and sentences in simple texts so the reading is smooth.

### Learning about the world through text:\*

- Asking and answering questions about stories and texts read aloud. (Children may need some prompting.) Retelling what happened and explaining key ideas.
- Figuring out the meaning of unknown words by using pictures, context, etc. (Children may need support with pronunciation.)
- Showing something new they have learned from text or about a topic. This can be in lots of ways: speaking and conversation, illustrations, letters, journals, stories, posters, or sentences on the page.
- Using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to answer a question or describe an event or topic from a text. Children may use simple sentences and some **inventive spelling**.

*\*The texts used for this purpose are often read aloud since they are more complex than the child could read alone. But texts children can read for themselves (with support as needed) may also be used.*



## EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT LEARNING

- Read aloud to your child for 20 minutes each day. Talk about what is happening. Ask what they are learning.
- Pick a topic to learn about together. Read books, look online, do things together. You can help your child build knowledge and develop a love of learning.
- Play sound games with your child! Pick a letter sound to start as many words as you can in a sentence ("My mom makes me move..."). Make silly words ("big," "boom," "bop," "biz," "baz"). Clap out syllables. Sing songs together and call out the rhyming words.
- Identify the sounds in the beginning, middle, and end of spoken words. Separate words into their sounds (/b/ /a/ /t/). Then blend them back together ("b-a-t bat!").
- Have your child help with real-world writing. Use starting sounds. Then add ending or middle sounds. ("Let's start the grocery list. What letter should you write to help me remember to buy milk?")



# MATHEMATICS

## WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO



Throughout the school year, kindergarten students will spend the most time working on the following topics. They should understand them well by the end of the year.

- Counting to 10. By the end of the year, children should be able to count to 100.
- Counting objects to tell how many there are.
- Comparing two groups of objects to tell which group, if either, has more. (Group size of up to 20.)
- Understanding which of two written numbers between 1 and 10 is greater (6 is greater than 2).
- Acting out addition and subtraction word problems. Drawing pictures to represent and solve the problems.
- Adding with a sum of 10 or less. Subtracting from a number 10 or less.
- Adding and subtracting very small numbers quickly and accurately ( $3 + 1$ ).



## EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT LEARNING

- Gather small similar items to create a “counting collection.” Have your child count the items out loud. (“One raisin. Two raisins.”) You can use any small object you have at home.
- Ask your child ‘how many?’ questions. (“How many raisins are in this pile? How many in that pile?”). Keep the amounts fairly small, inside the range of counting words your child can say in order.
- Split the collection into two groups to ask greater than/less than/equal to questions. (“Are there more raisins in this group or that one?”)
- Ask your child to count objects into piles of 10 objects. Begin by asking your child to practice **rote counting** to 10, and then from 10 to 20. Then practice counting by 10 to 100 (10, 20, 30...100).





## EDUCATION WORDS



Sometimes, you'll hear educators use a word that has a specific meaning in schools. Understanding those terms will help you speak the same language!

### Decodable

Decodable texts are those that are connected to sound and spelling patterns that have already been taught, so most words the students read will be ones they can decode based on what they have been taught. (For example, students who have learned the sounds /a/, /c/, and /t/ can decode "cat.")

### Inventive spelling

Spelling a word using spelling attempts based on letters that the child knows to represent each sound. Accurate spelling is less important than ensuring that your child is using what they have been taught, and building up their ability to sound out words when writing.

### Phonemic awareness

The ability to recognize that spoken words are made up of individual sounds (or phonemes), and to identify, produce, and play with those individual sounds (a critical part of **phonological awareness**).

### Phonological awareness

The ability to recognize the sounds of language, including rhyme, syllables, and the sounds in words.

### Reading level

Teachers often determine the grade level at which a student is reading. But sometimes, children are then limited to reading texts at that level (typically a letter or number). This practice is one to be wary of, particularly if children are limited to reading only texts that are below the grade level goals, or texts that aren't **decodable** and don't match their phonics instruction.

### Rote counting

Counting numbers in order (1, 2, 3, 4, 5...).

### Sight words

Sight words are any words that a child can read automatically.



## TIPS FOR TALKING WITH TEACHERS

### Literacy

- What are my child's strengths, and how do you use them in instruction?
- How do you select texts? Will my child see characters and topics that represent them, their background, and their identity? Will they learn new perspectives and about new and diverse characters through the texts you use in the classroom?
- What letters and sounds should my child have mastered at this point in the year? Has my child mastered these sounds? Does my child have a chance to read texts that help them practice decoding sounds they are learning? Be sure to talk about what you are seeing at home when you are helping your child.
- What topics are children learning about through reading? What should my child be able to understand and talk about as a result of what they have read?
- Is my child able to talk, draw, or write in ways that show you they understand what they are reading and learning about? If not, what challenges are they facing?
- What kind of book(s) is my child reading during independent reading? Are they limited to a specific reading level?

### Math

- What kinds of number problems are children learning to solve this year?
- Ask for specific updates on how your child is progressing in their understanding of the key content of the grade.
- What should my child be able to understand and talk about as a result of what they have learned?
- Is my child able to demonstrate to you that they understand what they are learning about? If not, what challenges are they facing? How can I help?





## TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO HELP



### Literacy

- How to teach **sight words**  
<https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog%2Fliteracy-now%2F2016%2F06%2F23%2Fteach-lldquo-sight-words-rdquo-as-you-would-other-words>
- How to help your child read and understand  
<https://www.pacer.org/pdf/ge/GE-3.pdf>
- These resources include downloadable texts and resources for beginning readers  
<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/decodable-text-sources>
- What success in kindergarten reading looks like by the end of the year  
<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/grades/kindergarten/>
- What kindergarten writing samples look like from the start of the year to the end  
<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/category/milestones-topics/writing-samples/>



### Math

- Cards that help children tell the number of objects in a small set quickly, without counting  
<https://earlymath.erikson.edu/quantity-cards/>
- A quick, fun game for math practice with numbers up to 20  
<https://mathforlove.com/lesson/save-twenty/>
- Memory game with a twist, finding pairs that add up to 5, 10, or another target number  
<https://mathforlove.com/lesson/sum-memory/>
- A short video story that uses items found in nature to practice subtraction  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vq2OIWlsjXk&feature=youtu.be>
- A readiness check to find out how your child is doing  
<https://bealearninghero.org/readiness-check/>
- Tasks for a variety of math topics at the kindergarten level  
<http://tasks.illustrativemathematics.org/content-standards/K>

## MY NOTES AND QUESTIONS

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