

A BOOKLET FOR PARENTS

# Learning to Play and Playing to Learn: Getting Ready for School



*best start*  
*meilleur départ*

by/par health **nexus** santé

## What is this booklet about?

*Learning to play and playing to learn* is a parent resource. It is based on the research of what, how, and when your child learns. This booklet is filled with:

- up-to-date information
- helpful tips
- checklists
- links to other resources.

All this helps your child to grow and develop the best way so that he becomes ready

## Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for everyone who cares for children.

- ✓ Parents
- ✓ Grandparents
- ✓ Guardians
- ✓ Child care providers
- ✓ Health care providers
- ✓ Family
- ✓ Friends

**Note:** We use the term 'parent' in this resource to represent all significant care providers in your child's life. We use 'he' in one section and 'she' in the following section when we are talking about a child. You may not be familiar with all the words and concepts used in this booklet. The glossary at the end explains many of them.



## What does this booklet help parents to learn?

The information and examples in this booklet show you how you can help your child's brain and body grow and thrive. It will also help you feel more confident that your child is ready to learn in Kindergarten and beyond.

When you get to the end of this booklet, you will see that it is not the ABCs and 123s that are most important in the early years, but how you play and interact with your child.

## Did you know?

You are your child's greatest teacher and role model.

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# The journey to school and lifelong learning



Through play, children learn many skills, such as how to interact with other people, and different ways of thinking, long before they start school or even Kindergarten. These skills help children do well in school and in life. When children feel good about learning and are eager, curious, and confident when starting school, they are more likely to:

- do well in school
- finish school
- continue on a journey of lifelong learning.

Starting school is a big milestone for you and your child. Kindergarten prepares your child for the type of learning that takes place in grade one and beyond. It is free for all children in Ontario.

In Kindergarten children learn by:

- exploring the world through play with the active presence of teachers.
- having teachers guide their learning through play activities that suit the child's age and level of development.

Many children in Ontario will start full-day learning when they start Kindergarten. For more information about full-day early learning, go to the Ministry of Education website at: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/earlylearning](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/earlylearning)



# What does a Kindergarten day look like?

Activities that take place in Kindergarten include:



Listening to stories read by the teacher



Enjoying learning activities through play



Solving problems through play and communication



Playing actively both indoors and outdoors (e.g., climbing, riding tricycles)



Having a quiet time or rest period



Eating healthy meals and snacks



Making friends through play



Learning to get along with other children and the teacher.



# How do children learn?

From the day they are born, children learn and develop by:

- touching
- seeing
- hearing
- smelling
- tasting
- moving
- doing (for example, playing).

Children's early development and later health and learning is shaped by the day-to-day experiences within their family and community. Children learn by playing in places where they feel safe, respected, and loved. Children's play is children's work. Remember, you are your child's greatest teacher and role model!

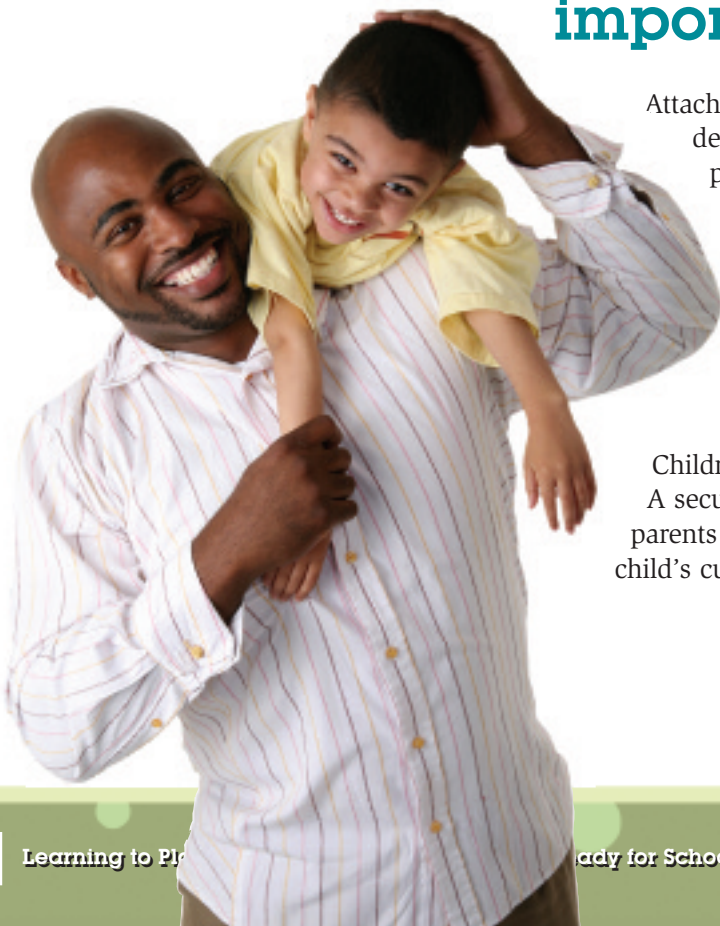
Some things that help children learn and be ready for Kindergarten are:

- a secure attachment
- self-regulation
- play (yes, you may be surprised to hear that play is included!).

Let's find out why these concepts are so important.



## Why is a secure attachment important for learning?



Attachment is a powerful, emotional relationship that develops between children and the important people in their lives. Parents can do many things to help their child develop a secure attachment. Two key ingredients are:

1. Parents protect children during times of stress and danger.
2. Parents encourage children to explore the world around them when it is safe.

Children form either secure or insecure attachments. A secure attachment is more likely to develop when parents respond warmly and consistently to their child's cues and their child's needs.

# How can I help my child develop a secure attachment?

Here are some things parents can do that help develop a secure attachment.

- Pick up your baby when she cries.
- Comfort your child when she is hurt, sad, or frightened.
- Support your child's learning by playing with her when she is learning a new skill and/or practicing skills she already has.
- Show and tell your child you are delighted to see her each time you pick her up from school or daycare, when she wakes up in the morning, or at every other opportunity.

A secure attachment helps your child:

- grow and develop in a healthy way
- feel safe to explore the world around her through play
- think and feel more positively
- develop into a confident and curious learner
- get along well with others
- feel empathy for others
- have a good self-image, lots of self-confidence, and good self-regulation.



# Why is self-regulation important for learning?

Self-regulation is a skill that we learn throughout life. The foundations are set in the early years. Self-regulation develops when caring adults respond sensitively to a child. A secure attachment promotes good self-regulation in the child.

Self-regulation is being able to:

- stay calmly focused and alert or shift attention when needed
- control one's feelings and impulses
- tolerate frustration and resist doing something tempting (e.g., taking someone's toy)
- understand how to behave in different situations
- use information to plan, solve problems, and complete tasks.

## Examples for 0-1 year-olds:

Of course, children cannot do all this when they are born. Parents help their babies and children regulate their emotions, attention, and behaviour by responding to their cues. Cues are signals your baby or child gives through facial expressions, body language, sounds, and crying. When you read these signals and respond to them consistently, your child will begin to learn to regulate his emotions, attention, and behaviour.

- *The baby pulls his hands to his face or tries to suck on things that touch his cheeks. This shows that he is hungry. You respond by feeding him.*
- *The baby is smiling at the parent playing with him. This shows that he is still interested in the game they are playing. You continue the game as long as the baby smiles and looks at you.*

## Examples for 1- 2 year-olds:

Toddlers still need a lot of help to regulate emotions, attention, and behaviour. Toddlers begin to read the cues from parents and respond to them.

- *Parents may help their toddler who has to wait in line for his turn, by giving an explanation ahead of time, such as, "Your turn comes after Josie's. Everyone gets a turn."*
- *A toddler may show a toy or book to his parents. When you show interest and look at the book with him, you encourage the toddler's attention. In fact, looking at the same page at the same time and shifting attention from page to page is an important experience for later development. It supports your child's ability to focus when he learns to read.*



## Examples for 2 - 5 year-olds:

Preschoolers begin to self-regulate their emotions, behaviour, and attention. They still need help from adults, but begin to read the cues given by others that tell them to take turns, share, wait, be friendly, calm down, focus, complete tasks, and work hard at play.

- *A preschooler is showing signs that he is getting frustrated because the puzzle he is working on is hard. You encourage him with a few words such as, "See if this piece fits, if you turn it the other way." He will feel happy and proud when the puzzle is finished and will stay focused on what he is doing the next time.*
- *A preschooler is telling a story about his day at preschool. Even though you are busy, you ask him questions about his day and listen carefully to what he has to share.*

Children with good self-regulation are able to:

- follow directions more easily
- communicate their needs more appropriately
- solve problems and complete tasks more easily
- use information from previous experiences
- get along well with others.

These skills help children when they start school.



## How does a child develop self-regulation?

Through the loving and consistent responses from parents and lots of practice through play!



# Why is play important for learning?

Play is the true work of a child. Children are busy when they are playing, and they are learning when they play. For example, when children are lifting, dropping, looking, pouring, bouncing, hiding, building, knocking down, climbing, running, and play acting they are learning.

Your child is learning the following things through play:

- scientific concepts, such as what sinks and floats and how to balance blocks to build a tower
- mathematical concepts, such as how to divide toys or treats evenly, or what is bigger, smaller, more or less
- literacy skills, such as trying out new words, telling stories, or pretend play
- social skills, such as how to get along with others, make friends, and be respectful
- thinking skills, such as how to recognize and solve problems
- movement skills, such as walking, running, hopping, balancing, throwing and catching.

Play acting is really important for your child. When children play act they practice real life situations. Research shows that children who play act:

- have greater language skills
- have better social skills
- have more imagination
- are more likely to be kind to others
- are less aggressive
- show more self-control and higher levels of thinking
- develop better self-regulation.

Play acting is an activity that you and your child can do together. For example, you can:

- act out a story you have read together
- have a tea party with dolls and teddy bears
- pretend to be a horse and rider.

Younger children play better side by side than together. They often want exactly what the other child is playing with. Preschoolers begin to play together, but don't always cooperate. If you have more than one child, help them develop rules that will work for everyone. For example, if they want a toy another child is playing with:

- They need to give the other child another toy in exchange.
- They can each have the toy for five minutes.



# Active play



Healthy habits start earlier than you think. Active play is a healthy habit to develop.

Why? Active play is fun. At the same time, children learn a lot of skills such as:

- eye-hand coordination
- large muscle skills (e.g., running)
- small muscle skills (e.g., picking up a small ball).

Active play is required for healthy growth and development. It builds confidence, basic movement skills, and helps a child to:

- play with others
- develop an imagination and self-esteem
- stay healthy.

Children aged 2 to 5 years should play actively for at least one to two hours every day.

Active play can happen during the day as part of play, games, transportation (e.g., walking), or a family activity such as swimming or skating. Your child learns from you. Remember you are her greatest teacher and role model. If you are active, she will also be active.

Some examples of how you can include active play both indoors and out include:

- Put on some music and dance or move around.
- Create an obstacle course and crawl under, climb over, or move around the obstacles.
- Go for a walk around your neighbourhood (this also helps your child become familiar with the school and the way to school).
- Roll, throw, catch, and kick balls of different sizes.
- Go skating or swimming.
- Visit the park or playground.

**So, go play with your child!** You are your child's favourite toy. There is nothing in the world your child would rather do than play with you!





# How can I play with my child?

Different adults play differently with their children. You may prefer to play active games while your partner likes to play games with rules. You may like to read to your child while your partner tells stories and acts them out. That is okay. Children need more than one adult in their lives. Parents, family members, and other caregivers all provide different opportunities for your child to play, explore, and learn.

Encourage other family members and care providers to play with your child. Just set some clear safety rules for everyone. It also helps, if everyone knows the developmental stage of your child and can play with his according to his age and ability (check out the Nipissing District Developmental Screens on pages 14, 16 and 18).

## Tips that help you play with your child:

- Whenever possible, respond when your child initiates play.
- Talk to your child while he is playing, explain and name things he is playing with.
- Ask your child questions about his play (for example: what, where, why, when, who and how?). This will help him learn to self-reflect and encourage his thinking skills.
- Read stories with your child and act them out (for example: stories about children starting school).
- Add dolls, unbreakable dishes, pretend food, and dress-up clothes to your child's play area.
- Add paper and crayons to your child's play area so he can make scribbles, lists, drawings, and plans. This helps help your child develop writing skills for school.
- Add measuring cups and rulers to stimulate his interest in mathematical and scientific concepts.





- Use music to move and dance with your child, or to help him become quiet.
- Take your child out for a walk around your neighbourhood or a hike through the park.
- Talk about the things you have seen together.
- Pretend play what you have done together (for example: going to the grocery store).
- Develop a routine so your child has a time for active play and a time for quiet play.
- Let your child help you with simple chores and talk about them.
- Bake, cook and prepare food with your child.

**Provide opportunities for your child to use all his developing skills:**

- *large muscle skills* – running, climbing, pulling, pushing
- *small muscle skills* – drawing, painting, catching
- *social skills* – turn taking, sharing, cooperating, initiating
- *emotional skills* – showing feelings, caring
- *language skills* – listening, rhyming, singing, telling stories
- *thinking skills* – exploring, planning, matching, problem-solving.

# How can I help my child be ready to learn?

Seven very important ingredients for learning are:

## 1. Lots of love

Providing your child with lots of love and responding warmly to her cues leads to a secure attachment. Read more about attachment on page 4.

## 2. Talking and listening

Your child learns when you talk with her. Singing, rhyming and reading also build her skills. Even before she can speak, she can tell you things through signals or cues. Respond to her and listen to her when she speaks and she will learn how to communicate with you and others. Check your child's speech and language development using the growth and development checklists on pages 14, 16 and 18.

## 3. Play, play, and more play

Different types of play help your child grow and develop. Spend time playing with your child. That is what she likes best. You can also take her to play groups and Ontario Early Years Centres to help your child get used to playing with other children. Read more about play on page 8.

## 4. Daily physical activity through active play

Provide opportunities for lots of physical, active play to help your child develop skills and strong muscles and bones. Read more on page 9.

## 5. Good nutrition

Good nutrition gives your child the building blocks to grow, have enough energy to learn, and stay healthy. To learn more about your child's nutrition and school, see page 20.

## 6. Daily routines

It helps your child if she has routines for getting up, eating, going to bed, active play, and quiet play. It makes your child feel secure and avoids difficult behaviour. Don't forget to include special events such as birthday parties, outings, or cultural celebrations. To find out more about routines for starting school, go to the Routines and self-help quiz on page 24.

## 7. Regular health and development check-ups

Your child learns better when she feels well and can hear and see well. Health checks and immunizations help keep your child healthy. Any health problem your child may have, should be addressed early, so that she can do well in school. Sometimes the classroom or the school routines need to be adjusted to accommodate a child who has a special need. To find out more about your child's health, go to the checklists, quizzes and information on pages 14 – 25.

You also help your child learn when you talk with her about school and communicate with her teachers.



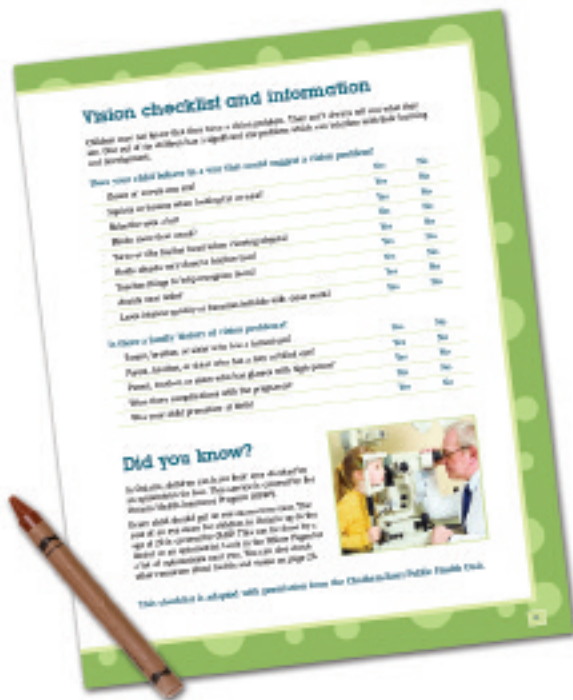


# How can I know how my child is doing?

All parents want their children to do the best they can in school and in life. The Nipissing District Developmental Screen is an easy-to-use tool to help you track how your child is developing according to his or her age. There are several screens for various ages. The screen asks if your child can do certain things at a certain age in the areas of:

- vision
- hearing
- speech and language
- large muscles
- small muscles
- thinking and learning
- social
- emotional
- self-help

You can find the screens in the next section under *Growth and development checklist for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds.*



## Checklists, quizzes and more information

Here are a number of checklists and quizzes that can help you track how your child is doing.

- Growth and development checklist for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds
- School related nutrition information
- Vision checklist
- Your child's smile – A dental checklist
- Immunization information
- Routines and self-help checklist
- Parent quiz.

# Age 3 – Nipissing District Developmental Screen

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The Nipissing District Developmental Screen™ is a checklist designed to help monitor your child's development.

✓ ✓  
Yes No

By Three Years of age, does your child...

- |                       |                       |   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 1. Speak clearly enough to be understood most of the time by family?                      |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 2. Understand two step directions (e.g. "Pick up your shoes and put them in the closet")? |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 3. Speak in two to five word sentences (e.g. "I go home now")?                            |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 4. Correctly say the words – my, home, pie, hop, bee, bib, no, man, one?                  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 5. Understand and use some describing words like big, dirty, wet, hot?                    |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 6. Walk up the stairs/steps using the handrail?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 7. Stand on one foot briefly?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 8. Throw a ball forward at least one metre (three feet)?                                  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 9. Twist lids off jars or turn knobs?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 10. Turn the pages of a book one at a time?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 11. Play make-believe games with actions and words?                                       |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 12. Dress or undress with help?*  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 13. Share some of the time (e.g. toys, books)?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 14. Show affection with words and actions?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 15. Play alongside others comfortably?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 16. Cooperate with parent's request half of the time?                                     |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 17. Listen to music or stories for 5 to 10 minutes with you?                              |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 18. Greet friends and familiar adults when reminded?                                      |



**Note:** It is recommended that all children by this age have a vision, hearing and dental checkup. Ask your family doctor or public health unit where these services are available in your community.

Always talk to your health care or child care professional if you have any questions about your child's development or well being. See reverse side for instructions, limitation of liability, and product license.






\* item may not be common to all cultures

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## Age 3 – Activities for your child...

 Emotional 
  Fine Muscle 
  Large Muscle 
  Learning/Thinking 
  Self-Help 
  Social 
  Speech/Language

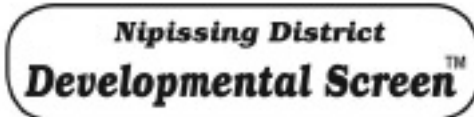
The following activities will help you play your part in your child's development.

	Books are some of my favorite things. Read to me often throughout the day. Make it part of our daily routine by setting aside a special time. Choose books that are colourful and interesting to me.
	Silly games make me laugh. Make cards using simple magazine pictures. Add something that does not belong like a girl with a moustache or a fish with legs. Giggle with me as we talk about what's funny.
	I enjoy guessing games. Place some familiar objects on the table and we can take turns describing them. For example "Show me something we use to brush our hair". Sometimes make it silly so we can laugh.
	We can play by making a line on the floor with a rope or masking tape. We can lie, stand, walk, run, gallop on or jump over the line.
	Let's play ball! Encourage me to throw and catch a ball, hit a ball with a bat or racket, or kick a ball at a target. We can hold a beach ball between us using different parts of our bodies (elbows, legs, hands, knees, feet, etc.).
	I like sorting objects. Give me an empty egg carton where I can put different objects into the cups. Things like buttons, different coloured objects, shapes, and rocks are fun to sort.
	Encourage me to create with LEGO, puzzles, play dough, nesting toys, peg boards, beads and blocks.
	I enjoy surprises. Let's hide different objects in a box or bag for a game of touch and tell. We can take turns feeling the objects and describing what's in the bag. Pull them out to see if we were right.
	Encourage me to do things by myself to help me become independent. It is important for me to be able to get dressed and undressed, wash myself, and help to clean up. I'm learning about responsibility.
	I like to play with other children but sometimes I need help to take turns, share and co-operate.
	We can be whomever we want or do what ever we want when we play make believe. Let's pretend to go camping, play astronaut, firefighter or dancer, etc.
	I may be afraid of things that didn't bother me before. My fears are real to me so help me to feel safe.

**I have lots of energy and need space to run, climb, pull a wagon and ride a tricycle.**

Always talk to your health care or child care professional if you have any questions about your child's development or well being. See reverse side for instructions, limitation of liability, and product license.

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# Age 4 – Nipissing District Developmental Screen

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The Nipissing District Developmental Screen™ is a checklist designed to help monitor your child's development.

✓ ✓  
**Yes No** | **By Four Years of age, does your child...**

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1. Understand three-part related directions and longer sentences (e.g. "Put your toys away and wash your hands before lunch")?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2. Say rhymes or sing children's songs?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3. Ask lots of questions (e.g. "How?" and "Why?")?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	4. Correctly say the words – two, hat, do, mud, fun, off, key, cookie, go, hug?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	5. Use some word endings as in <i>running</i> and <i>jumped</i> ?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	6. Tell what is happening in a picture when you ask?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	7. Speak clearly enough to be understood most of the time?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	8. Go up and down stairs alternating feet (with one foot on each step)?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	9. Stand on one foot for one to three seconds without support?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	10. Try to hop on one foot?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	11. Catch a large ball with outstretched arms?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	12. Snip paper with scissors?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	13. Draw a person with three or more body parts?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	14. Hold a crayon or pencil correctly?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	15. Undo buttons and zippers?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	16. Use the toilet/potty during the day (e.g. toilet trained)?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	17. Take turns and share with other children in small group activities?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	18. Try to comfort someone who is upset?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	19. Play near and talk to other children while continuing with own activity?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	20. Look for adult approval (e.g. "Watch me." or "Look what I did")?



**Note:** It is recommended that all children by this age have a vision, hearing and dental checkup. Ask your family doctor or public health unit where these services are available in your community.

Always talk to your health care or child care professional if you have any questions about your child's development or well being. See reverse side for instructions, limitation of liability, and product license.

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## Age 4 – Activities for your child...

 Emotional 
  Fine Muscle 
  Large Muscle 
  Learning/Thinking 
  Self-Help 
  Social 
  Speech/Language

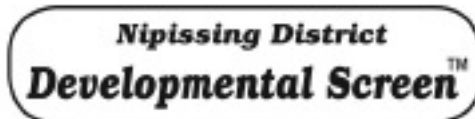
The following activities will help you play your part in your child's development.

	Now I can tell longer stories. Show me a series of pictures and tell me a story about them. After I know it well, have me put the pictures in order. I can retell the story or make up one of my own.
	I am learning about words and sounds. Play rhyming games and laugh at the silly words we can make together.
	I like it when you read to me. Storybooks are more exciting for me when you change your voice for different parts. Sometimes we can listen to books on tape too. Take me to the library.
	Let's play a memory game. We can take turns giving each other directions. E.g. "Put your hands on your head, then turn around, then touch the ground."
	I want to show you what I can do. Set up an obstacle course so I can practice many skills: walking, running, crawling, balancing, climbing, jumping over things, and hopping (on one foot or both feet).
	I enjoy ball games. I want to learn to use a bat, racket, hockey stick, golf club, ball glove, etc. I like to play with you or a friend.
	I can play group games with simple rules: Duck Duck Goose, Ring Around the Rosie, London Bridge is Falling Down and the Farmer in the Dell.
	I like activities that let me practice cutting, gluing, painting, drawing, dot to dot, simple mazes and puzzles. Soon I may be able to print letters, numbers and my name.
	I want to practice my lacing skills. Encourage me to thread a shoelace through the holes in my shoes or holes punched around a picture. I am getting better at doing buttons and zippers but I still need practice.
	I need to be heard to know that I am special. Listen when I talk to you.
	I'm never too old or big to be hugged so please do it often.
	I need opportunities to play with other children. If I'm not in school I need to be involved in group activities on a regular basis.
	It's important for me to know my full name, address and telephone number.

**I learn best by playing and using my imagination. Please limit and monitor my video game, computer and TV time.**

Always talk to your health care or child care professional if you have any questions about your child's development or well being. See reverse side for instructions, limitation of liability, and product license.

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# Age 5 – Nipissing District Developmental Screen

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The Nipissing District Developmental Screen™ is a checklist designed to help monitor your child's development.

✓ ✓  
**Yes No** | **By Five Years of age, does your child...**

- |                       |                       |   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 1. Count to ten and know common colours and shapes?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 2. Speak clearly in adult-like sentences most of the time?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 3. Tell long stories about own past experiences?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 4. Correctly say the words – sew, house, zoo, buzz, chop, much, jam, fudge, shoe, push, look, ball? |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 5. Use sentences to describe objects and events?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 6. Walk on a straight line, only stepping off once or twice?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 7. Stop, start and change direction smoothly when running?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 8. Throw and catch a ball successfully most of the time?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 9. Cooperate with adult requests most of the time?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 10. Hold a crayon or pencil correctly?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 11. Climb playground equipment without difficulty?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 12. Draw lines, simple shapes and a few letters?*   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 13. Hop on one foot?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 14. Use scissors to cut along a thick line drawn on a piece of paper?                               |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 15. Dress and undress with little help?*  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 16. Usually play well in groups?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 17. Talk about having a best friend?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 18. Share willingly with others?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 19. Work alone at an activity for 20-30 minutes?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 20. Separate easily from you?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 21. Play make believe games with others?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 22. Respond verbally to “hi” and “how are you”?   |



**Note:** It is recommended that all children by this age have a vision, hearing and dental checkup. Ask your family doctor or public health unit where these services are available in your community.

Always talk to your health care or child care professional if you have any questions about your child's development or well being. See reverse side for instructions, limitation of liability, and product license.

\* item may not be common to all cultures




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## Age 5 – Activities for your child...

 Emotional 
  Fine Muscle 
  Large Muscle 
  Learning/Thinking 
  Self-Help 
  Social 
  Speech/Language

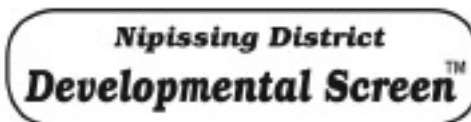
The following activities will help you play your part in your child’s development.

	I’m learning so much. Let’s play using letters, numbers and colours. E.g. “I spy with my little eye three things that are red.” or “I spy something blue that starts with B”.
	I like a mystery. You think of something and I will guess what it is by asking you questions, “Is it food?” “Is it an animal?” “Does it have four legs?” “Is it a dog?”
	I have a lot to say. Talk with me often throughout the day about things that interest me. When you listen to me I learn how to tell a story from beginning to end. Ask questions so that I can remember the details of my day.
	I like to answer the phone and talk to people I know. I feel proud to take a message for you.
	My friends and I enjoy going to the park or playground with you. We love to climb, swing, slide, and explore the equipment so we can try new things.
	I like to play games such as hide and seek, tag, dodge the ball and red rover. This helps me learn rules of games and helps me to take turns.
	I love to ride my bicycle and I may even be ready to let go of my training wheels. Make sure I am wearing my helmet.
	I still need lots of practice with pencils, crayons, and chalk. Activities like colouring, drawing, dot to dot, mazes, as well as tracing and copying letters, shapes and numbers will help me at school.
	I like to experiment using different materials. Fill up a craft box so I can be creative using glue, clay, wood, yarn, tape, scissors, paper, pencils, markers, crayons or odds and ends.
	Board games are fun. I learn about rules, counting, taking turns, winning and losing. Don’t always let me win. It’s all right for me to lose.
	Notice me doing something good and tell me how proud you are of me. This will make me feel good about myself and I will want to do it again.
	Help me learn about the feelings of others through stories. Characters in books have feelings and experiences, are afraid, or have problems to overcome. You can probably find a book about someone who is just like me.
	I feel important when I have a few simple jobs.

### Sign me up. I want to be part of a team.

Always talk to your health care or child care professional if you have any questions about your child’s development or well being. See reverse side for instructions, limitation of liability, and product license.

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## School related nutrition information

The following information will help you provide good nutrition for your child once he starts school.

- It is good for your child to eat a healthy breakfast every morning. Breakfast will provide the energy and nutrients his body needs to grow and his brain needs to learn.
- Your child will likely have to bring a morning snack, an afternoon snack, and a lunch to school. These should be healthy foods based on Canada's Food Guide – see the EatRight Ontario website at for healthy food ideas and sample lunches at: [www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=41](http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=41).
- Find out about the food allergy policy at your child's school. Once you know which foods to avoid, keep them in mind when reading the ingredient list on food labels and when packing snacks and lunches.
- Think about the containers and packaging for your child's lunches and snacks. Many schools ask parents to send reusable containers to reduce waste. Make sure your child can open and close the containers in his lunch box.
- Choose healthy drinks for your child, such as water, 100% juice, or milk. On hot days or school outings, send extra water for your child to drink.
- Make sure your child's food is safe to eat and is not likely to make him sick. Teach your child to wash his hands before eating. Pack foods that don't spoil easily. A small icepack or a frozen drink can keep your child's food cool. Check the EatRight Ontario website for food safety tips at: [www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=12](http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=12).
- When your child returns from school he may need a snack, especially if dinner is still some time away. Meals and snacks should be at the same time each day. Set a good example, eat with your child and choose healthy foods.
- Include a variety of different foods in the meals and snacks you provide at home or send to school with your child. Send healthy choices such as veggies and fruit or cheese and crackers for classroom celebrations or other school events.
- For more information check the nutrition resources here and at the end of this booklet.

If you have any questions about your child's nutrition or eating habits:

- talk to a dietitian at EatRight Ontario  
1-877-510-510-2 or [www.ontario.ca/eatright](http://www.ontario.ca/eatright)
- check *Canada's Food Guide* at:  
[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php)
- check out Aboriginal nutrition information for your child at  
[www.letsbehealthy.ca](http://www.letsbehealthy.ca)
- call your local Public Health Unit or Community Health Centre.



# Vision checklist and information

Children may not know that they have a vision problem. They can't always tell you what they see. One out of six children has a significant eye problem which can interfere with their learning and development.

## Does your child behave in a way that could suggest a vision problem?

Closes or covers one eye?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>
Squints or frowns when looking far or near?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>
Rubs the eyes a lot?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>
Blinks more than usual?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>
Turns or tilts his/her head when viewing objects?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>
Holds objects very close to his/her face?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>
Touches things to help recognize them?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>
Avoids near tasks?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>
Loses interest quickly or becomes irritable with close work?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>

## Is there a family history of vision problems?

Parent, brother, or sister who has a turned eye?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>
Parent, brother, or sister who has a lazy or blind eye?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>
Parent, brother, or sister who has glasses with high power?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>
Were there complications with the pregnancy?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>
Was your child premature at birth?	Yes <input type="radio"/>	No <input type="radio"/>

## Did you know?

In Ontario, children can have their eyes checked by an optometrist for free. This service is covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP).

Every child should get an eye exam every year. The cost of an eye exam for children in Ontario up to the age of 20 is covered by OHIP. This can be done by a doctor or an optometrist. Look in the Yellow Pages for a list of optometrists near you. You can also check other resources about health and vision on page 26.



**This checklist is adapted with permission from the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit.**



# My child's smile – a dental checklist

Try to set good oral health habits early in your child's life.

Do you help or supervise your child to brush his/her teeth twice a day?      **Yes**       **No**

An adult should help or supervise young children when they are brushing their teeth.

---

Does your child have less than two cups of juice a day?      **Yes**       **No**

Drinks containing sugar, even naturally, increase the risk of cavities in teeth.

---

If you have any cavities, have they been treated?      **Yes**       **No**

Bacteria that cause cavities can be passed on to your children.

---

Are your child's snacks a healthy choice?      **Yes**       **No**

Snacking often on sugary snacks will increase the acid attacks in your child's mouth.

---

Do you check all surfaces for decay?      **Yes**       **No**

Cavities found early can be fixed more easily and cheaply.  
Check chewing surfaces and lift the lip to check at the gum line.

---

Do you floss your child's teeth?      **Yes**       **No**

Many cavities start between teeth.

---

Has your child been to see a dental professional?      **Yes**       **No**

Children should see a dentist or oral hygienist by 12 months of age  
or within 6 months of getting their first teeth.

---

Is your child using a pea-sized drop of fluoridated toothpaste?      **Yes**       **No**

Fluoride helps to strengthen the teeth. Make sure your child does not swallow the toothpaste.

---

If you have answered 'No' to any of these questions, check with your local dental office.

**This checklist is adapted with permission from the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit.**

# Immunization

When your child starts school, all his shots (immunizations) need to be up to date.

To check which shots your child should have go to:

[www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/immun/pdf/schedule.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/immun/pdf/schedule.pdf)

Your child is due for another shot between the ages of 4-6 years.

Keep a record of your child's immunizations. Your school or Public Health Unit may ask for them.

If you have questions about your child's immunizations, please call your local Public Health Unit.



# Routines and self-help checklist

This checklist will remind you of things in your daily routine and your child's daily routine that will help her be ready for school and ready to learn. Some questions about your child's self-help skills and safety practices are also included.

My child gets up around the same time each morning. Yes  No

My child has a bedtime routine and it is usually easy to get my child to sleep every evening. Yes  No

My child sleeps at least 10 hours most nights. Yes  No

My child has breakfast each morning. Yes  No

My child is busy with active play for at least one to two hours per day. Yes  No

My child has a time during the day when she plays quietly or has a nap. Yes  No

My child has no more than one hour of screen time (TV, computer, or video games) per day. Yes  No

My child can ask an adult for help. Yes  No

My child knows how to dress herself (except for some buttons, zippers, and ties). *\*Note: This is more likely for 4 or 5 year olds.* Yes  No

My child can go to the bathroom without or with little help. Yes  No

My child knows how to wash her hands to prevent the spread of infections. Yes  No

My child can tell others her full name. Yes  No

My child knows how to cross the street safely with an adult. Yes  No

I have shown my child how she will get to school and return home (walking with a designated adult, taking the school bus or being driven to school). Yes  No

My child is familiar with the school and the school yard. Yes  No

My child can open and close lunch and snack containers. Yes  No

My child can tell others about her activities, outings, or events. Yes  No

If you have answered "no" to any of these questions that does not mean your child is not ready for school. Just take some time to set routines and practice self-help and safety skills. Go back through this booklet and try some of the tips and activities.

You can do these things at home. You can also let your child play with other children so she can get to know other places and people before she starts school. To expose your child to different settings and people you can:

1. Go to early learning programs at Ontario Early Years Centres.
2. Go to your local library, recreation centre, friendship centre, or family resource centre.
3. Take your child on trips to the park, a museum, the grocery store, or for a bus ride.
4. Check whether any Head Start programs are available for your child.

For more tips and information, or if you have questions call your local Public Health Unit.



# Parent quiz

Now, that we are almost at the end of the booklet, let's review what we have talked about.

1. Children are learning from the day they are born. True  False

---

2. Good nutrition is an important ingredient for learning. True  False

---

3. A secure attachment develops when parents respond warmly to their child's needs and cues. True  False

---

4. Self-regulation is a skill that is learned during school age. True  False

---

5. Children learn through play. True  False

---

6. Active play develops children's large and small muscle skills. True  False

---

7. Young children prefer to play with other children. True  False

---

8. Parents can use the Nipissing District Developmental Screen to see if their child is developing according to his/her age. True  False

---

9. Knowing letters and numbers is the most important thing for children to be ready for school. True  False

---

## Answers:

1. **True.** From the day they are born, children learn and develop by: touching, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and doing (e.g., playing).
2. **True.** Seven very important ingredients for learning are: lots of love; talking and listening; play, play, and more play – with you; daily physical activity through active play; good nutrition; daily routines including lots of sleep; regular health check-ups.
3. **True.** A secure attachment is more likely to develop when parents respond warmly and consistently to their child's cues and their child's needs.
4. **False.** Self-regulation is a skill that is learned throughout life, but the foundations are set in the early years.
5. **True.** Children are busy when they are playing, and they are learning when they play.
6. **True.** Active play is fun. At the same time children learn a lot of skills such as eye hand coordination, large muscle skills (e.g., running), and small muscle skills (e.g., holding a fork).
7. **False.** You are your child's favorite toy. There is nothing in the world your child would rather do than play with you!
8. **True.** The Nipissing District Developmental Screen is an easy to use tool to help you track if your child is developing according to his age.
9. **False.** It is not the ABCs and 123s that are most important in the early years, but how you play and interact with your child. You are your child's greatest teacher and role model.

# Resources for families

This booklet has given you some answers and tips on how to prepare your child for school. Here are some more resources.

There are many wonderful resources in your community. To find out what is offered in your community contact your local **Public Health Unit or Band Council** (if you are living on a reserve) to find out what programs (e.g., Mother Goose programs), activities (e.g., skating), and resources (e.g., parks, libraries, community centres) are available in your community. Your local library also has books you can read with your child to help with the transition to school.

## Online resources

There are also lots of resources you can get online. If you don't have a computer or the Internet, you can access these at your local library or ask your public health nurse or a friend to print them out for you.

## Attachment:

*My Child and I – Attachment for Life.*

You can download this brochure from the Best Start Resource Centre at: [www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy\\_chld\\_dev/pdf/parent\\_attachment\\_eng.pdf](http://www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev/pdf/parent_attachment_eng.pdf)

Other Languages:  
[www.beststart.org/resources/other\\_languages/index.html](http://www.beststart.org/resources/other_languages/index.html)

## Growth and Development:

*Is My Child Growing Well?* This fact sheet tells parents about their child's growth. It is available in English, French, Spanish, and Traditional Chinese.

English: [www.cps.ca/english/statements/N/DC\\_ChildGrowParents.pdf](http://www.cps.ca/english/statements/N/DC_ChildGrowParents.pdf)

## Health:

*Baby Oral Health: Pregnancy through Childhood* is a good online resource for parents.

Go to: [www.utoronto.ca/dentistry/newsresources/kids/index.html](http://www.utoronto.ca/dentistry/newsresources/kids/index.html).

Vision: The *Eye See Eye Learn Program* was developed to raise awareness among parents about the importance of having their children's eyes checked before starting school. Go to: [www.optom.on.ca/students\\_and\\_educators/eye\\_see\\_eye\\_learn/what\\_is\\_eye\\_see\\_eye\\_learn](http://www.optom.on.ca/students_and_educators/eye_see_eye_learn/what_is_eye_see_eye_learn)

## Nutrition:

*Canada's Food Guide:* Download a FREE copy at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php)

*EatRight Ontario* has registered dietitians answer questions about your and your child's nutrition. The website also has fact sheets on a variety of nutrition topics. Here are two fact sheets related to school nutrition.

*Packing Healthy School Lunches and Snacks FAQs.* See: [www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=41](http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=41)

*Make a balanced breakfast a habit in your home.* Go to: [www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=85](http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=85)

*How to Build a Healthy Preschooler* is a brochure developed by the Nutrition Resource Centre that helps parents feed their preschool children in a healthy way. Go to: [www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=324](http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=324)

## Parent Involvement and Support:

Father toolkit: *Fatherhood –*

*It's the Best Job on the Planet*, go to: [www.mydad.ca/toolkits/nfp\\_toolkit\\_eng.pdf](http://www.mydad.ca/toolkits/nfp_toolkit_eng.pdf). This toolkit was funded by the CAPC/CPNP National Projects Fund and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

*Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres* provides support to Friendship Centres across Ontario. These centres have programs and support for urban Aboriginal children and their parents. Go to [www.ofifc.org](http://www.ofifc.org) to find a friendship centre in your area.

*Supporting Parents.* The Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs provides information and support for parents.  
Go to: [www.parentsmatter.ca](http://www.parentsmatter.ca)

The *Canadian Father Involvement Initiative – Ontario Network.* This website contains useful tips, resources, information, and downloadable booklets for anyone interested in learning more about father involvement in the lives of their children. There is also a section called “Fathering Q&A” where you can send a question and have it answered. Go to: [www.cfii.ca](http://www.cfii.ca)

### Play:

Active play: For ideas on how to include active play with your child and information about the importance of active play go to: Active Healthy Kids Canada at: [www.activehealthykids.ca](http://www.activehealthykids.ca)

*Have a ball together* is a website that provides information and tips on how to include active play, when playing with your child. [www.haveaballtogether.ca](http://www.haveaballtogether.ca)

The *Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs* has a set of brochures on playing with your child from birth to age 5 at [www.frp.ca](http://www.frp.ca) “Why Play?”.

*Toy Safety Tips* pamphlet from Health Canada. Go to: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/toy\\_safe-jouet\\_secur-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/toy_safe-jouet_secur-eng.php)

### School Readiness:

The Ministry of Education has *Planning Entry to School: A Resource Guide* on their website at: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/planningentry.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/planningentry.html). Particularly helpful for the transition to school is the *All about me* section that you can print off and fill in to help your child’s teacher know about your child. Go to: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/a2.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/a2.pdf)

### Other useful websites and phone numbers

**Canadian Child Care Federation.** This organization provides resources and professional development to child care practitioners and parents. Over 90 resource sheets on many different topics are available on their website at: [www.cccf-fcsge.ca/publications/resourcesheets\\_en.html](http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/publications/resourcesheets_en.html)

**Canadian Paediatric Society.** On this website parents can find lots of information about their child’s growth and development, health, safety, and many other topics. Go to: [www.caringforkids.ca](http://www.caringforkids.ca)

**EatRight Ontario** 1-800-510-510-2 or [www.ontario.ca/eatright](http://www.ontario.ca/eatright) offers nutrition advice and help by phone or Internet.

**Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Government of Ontario.** This website has information on programs and services for you, including a section on Early Childhood at [www.ontario.ca/children](http://www.ontario.ca/children)

- Aboriginal children
- Best Start program
- Ontario Early Years Centres
- Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program
- Infant Hearing Program
- Blindness and Low Vision
- Speech and Language program
- Special needs.

If you have any questions about services provided by the Government of Ontario go to: [www.serviceontario.ca](http://www.serviceontario.ca) or call: 1-800-267-8097.

**Public Health Units** in Ontario – to find your local Public Health Unit check [www.alphaweb.org/ont\\_health\\_units.asp](http://www.alphaweb.org/ont_health_units.asp).



# Glossary

Word(s)	Definition
<b>Attachment</b>	Attachment is a powerful, emotional relationship that develops between children and the important caregivers in their lives. Children can develop secure or insecure attachments with their caregivers.
<b>Cue</b>	A cue is a signal to indicate what the child or person wants or needs at that moment. Cues are not words, but other ways of communicating, such as behaviour (e.g., fidgeting), body language (e.g., yawning), facial expressions (e.g., smiling), and sounds (e.g., crying).
<b>Immunization</b>	Immunizations (also called vaccines or shots) are given by a health care provider. They help a person's immune system fight a disease such as measles or the flu that can be caught from others. From the age of two months, children in Ontario receive a number of immunizations to prevent them from getting diseases that can make them sick or cause long-term problems.
<b>Large muscle skills</b>	The ability to use the large muscles of the body in order to stand up, walk, run, pull, push, and balance oneself.
<b>Language skills</b>	These skills include speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
<b>Literacy skills</b>	These skills enable a child to read and write. Scribbling, drawing, looking at books, and pretend reading are also called pre-literacy skills.
<b>Quiet time</b>	Time that children spend each day in their bedroom or a quiet area, usually at the same time each day. They may not need a nap, just some quiet time to play with quiet toys or look at books.
<b>Self-regulation</b>	Self-regulation is the cornerstone of development and is the central building block of early learning. Self-regulation is the ability to adapt one's emotions, behaviours and attention to the demands of the situation.
<b>Self-help skills</b>	There are five major types of self-help skills: eating, dressing, grooming, toileting, and household skills (e.g., putting toys away or opening and closing a door).
<b>Small muscle skills</b>	These are skills that involve the use of the small muscles of the hand, fingers, and thumb, usually in coordination with the eyes (e.g., grasp a rattle, hold a pencil, pick up objects).
<b>Social skills</b>	These are skills which enable children to interact and communicate with other people. Social skills consist of behaviours that people learn in order to get along with others.

# Acknowledgements

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- Canadian Child Care Federation
- Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit
- George Brown College
- Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit
- Northwestern Health Unit
- Nutrition Resource Centre
- Ophea
- Peel District School Board
- University of Guelph

We would also like to thank the parents who helped to review and finalize this booklet.





**best start  
meilleur départ**

by/par health **nexus** santé

Best Start: Ontario's Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre

[www.healthnexus.ca](http://www.healthnexus.ca) | [www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org)

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