

# Independence



Hand-In-Hand



2011

## Fostering Independence in Your Preschooler

As your child reaches preschool age their independence with different skills should be increased. Fostering this independence teaches them life long skills

that will be beneficial when attending preschool. By encouraging your child to participate at home, you assist and reinforce what we teach at school. The

following are skills your child practices throughout their preschool day that can be carried over at home.



### **Taking care of personal belongings**

- Taking off and hanging up coat
    - We teach students the “Preschool Flip” where they lay their coat on the floor or table with the tag closest to their toes, “tag to toes”. The student then puts their hands into the arms of the coat and flips it over their head.
  - Unzipping and emptying backpack
    - Keep backpacks simple. While cute, decorations on backpacks make it difficult for children to independently zip and unzip their bags.
    - Backpacks should be large enough to hold an 8.5x11 inch folder
  - Putting items where they belong
  - Carrying their own backpack to and from school
  - Being able to manage their lunch box and all containers within
    - Putting straws in juice boxes
    - Opening plastic baggies (pinch and pull)
    - Opening Tupperware containers
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### **Cleaning up after themselves**

- Cleaning up toys after playing with them
  - Throwing rubbish in trashcan
  - Being able to wipe their mouths
  - Putting lunchboxes and placemats where they belong
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### **Self Help Skills**

- Washing and drying hands thoroughly
    - Students wash their hands many times throughout the day and it is important that they are actually getting all of the germs off before they touch food or toys. We encourage students to scrub the front, back, and in between their fingers when washing. We have them sing a song (Happy Birthday or Twinkle Twinkle) or count (1-5 for each area) when washing so they know they’ve done a thorough job. The same can be done for drying their hands.
  - Wiping after toileting
    - Even though children may be new to toileting, we encourage them to wipe first and then we can check to make sure they’re clean. This will reinforce the routine of toileting and increase their independence.
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### **Clothing**

- Being able to dress themselves (Keep in mind the fasteners on clothing when purchasing new items. Most children at this age are either working on or are toilet trained and independence with this skill is very important! Please make sure all fasteners are “kid friendly”)
- Children should be wearing clothing that promotes independence
  - Elastic waist-helps with independence during toileting
  - Fasteners that are easy
  - Zipper sweatshirts vs. pull on
- Clothing fasteners-Even though some fasteners may be difficult for children at this age they should be helping when possible. (Pulling the zipper up or down)
- Shoes
  - During the winter months students get a lot of practice taking off and putting on their shoes. Velcro shoes are most appropriate for preschoolers to encourage independence, along with pull on boots without fasteners.



## **Keep Things Simple**

The most important piece of information to remember is to keep things simple. Children at this age should be doing things, and should be expected to do things independently, but that won't be possible without caregiver help. Make sure items in their environment are set up to promote independence (Coat hooks are low enough, locations for items are easy access, kid friendly clothing is bought, etc.). There are also many other responsibilities that children can help with at home to foster independence. Most children love to help out at this age and you're giving them a chance to do that and to build their sense of self. They can help by:

- Putting dishes in the sink
- Putting laundry in the basket
- Helping set the table

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## **Independence Takes Time**

Just remember that fostering independence takes time. So make sure to set aside time so that your child is able to put on their own shoes and coat before heading out to play or to put on their own pajamas at night before bedtime. These are skills that children will use throughout their lifetime and this is the age where they all begin. A lot is expected of your child when they enter school so make sure you equip them with the skills necessary to succeed, independence being the foundation.