

How to preschool your kids in between meals, meetings, and mishaps

Parents, this is a mercifully short guide on how to preschool your children and get them ready for kindergarden (should kindergarden open up again) and for life. This is a guide for busy parents who don't have a lot of time, but also don't want their kids to be fall behind. Good news, you can preschool your kids in just minutes a day and spread it throughout the day. The only thing you need is consistency, a spotify account, and a library card.

How to preschool in minutes a day, (Part I).

1. Break it up into small (5-10 minute) chunks.

Toddlers and preschoolers have short attention spans, and so do you! Break up any learning into small chunks so that everyone can pay attention. An analogy would be to think of learning as mind food. If you cut up your steaks into bite-size pieces for your toddlers, you should also cut up the learning into bite-size pieces. A quick guide is to add 5 minutes of attention span to the age of your child: 5 yo + 5 minutes = 10 minutes chunks of learning at a time.

2. Spread learning throughout the day. Think: breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Just as you need time to digest the food you eat, you also need time to digest the learning you do. That is why you need to spread out the learning throughout the day. No one sits and eats for six hours straight. So don't expect your little ones to sit and learn for hours at a time like they do in public school. At home, we can do things differently, more gently and more effectively. They need time to digest what they have learned. They need to absorb it, play around with it in their minds, make sense of it. This is where the internalization and real learning happens.

3. Make it a habit.

There are tons of great books out there on how to build good habits. If you are Type-A parent, I'll list some of those below. For the busy parents, just know that the easiest way to build a new habit is to piggy-back it on another already established habit. You already know this from your nightly routines (dinner, shower, bedtime story, pray, sleep). The easiest way to add learning

into your day is to piggy-back it on things you already have to do everyday: eat. I suggest doing your learning with your meal times. The second important thing to know about habit is to secure it one at a time. In our accompanying ***implementation guide***, we set out a weekly schedule of how you might incorporate one new habit into your homeschool at a time.

4. Make it stick.

This is easy for preschoolers. Songs and games are best way to make any learning memorable for them. Why is this important? You want them to be singing the songs, playing the games long after you are done teaching. You are reaping benefits beyond the learning time together. Great story books are also wonderful tools to make learning memorable. A favorite fairy tale they want you to read over and over again, a hero story they want to pretend play, or a silly poem they tell back to you after you have read it, these are all ways to train them up to love and enjoy learning.

5. Make it fun.

We have listed some songs and topics below to guide your time together. But if either you or your kid do not enjoy it, don't do it. It really doesn't matter what the content is, as long as you enjoy learning and doing it together, they will be learning. At this stage, it is more important they enjoy learning. Find songs you also enjoy listening to. Find games you also enjoy playing. Find books you also enjoy reading. Your learning and your enjoyment will be the best learning for them.

How to preschool in minutes a day, (Part II).

1. Read aloud in the morning: 5-10 minutes.

"Fill your house with stacks of books, in all the crannies and all the nooks." Believe this, it's from a doctor, Dr. Seuss. There are tons of research on why reading is important and what reading does for a child's brain development. No phonics program, math drill, or flash card will ever feed your child's mind and imagination the way a good storybook can. If you do nothing in these early years, but get your children to love reading, you would have succeeded in setting them up for a lifetime of delightful learning. Give them the gift of reading as early as you can.

2. Read aloud before bedtime: 5-10 minutes.

Start and end your day with a good storybook. Not only is reading together good for their minds, it is also good for their hearts. Time you spent reading together is time spent strengthening your relationship. It gives you both a chance to resolve any hurts and strains during the day, especially as you begin your preschooling journey. It is also creating shared experiences. You will travel together to far away places and meet all kinds of interesting people. You will build a shared vocabulary of thoughts, words, and experiences that no teacher can replicate. These shared experiences will be invaluable as you teach your child.

3. Breakfast phonics: 5 minutes

Sing a phonics song together over breakfast. No need to make this fancy, just learn the song and sing along. Use fridge magnets or any alphabets you have around the house to point out what you are singing. Learn the letter names, then the letter sounds, then word families. Slowly and gradually build in more sounds and letters as your child is ready. The more you read to your child, the easier this process of learning to read will be. Just keep it simple and consistent.

4. Lunchtime math: 5 minutes

Sing a math song or play math game together over lunch. Start with learning to count, then sorting, grouping, ordering, categorizing, patterning. Then you can add in simple adding and subtracting, multiplying and dividing. You can use anything around the kitchen to reinforce these math principals. Fruit slices, cookies, cereals, forks, spoons, cups, plates, etc. Again, just keep it simple and consistent.

5. Dinner life-skills and kindness time: 5 minutes

Why do we have a third category of life skills? Because most of preschool is really about learning to wait in line, take turns, follow directions, make friends, say sorry, clean up, and take care of ourselves and each other. Each week we choose a life-skills or kindness song to learn together. Use this as an opportunity to talk to your kids and demonstrate this life skill for them throughout the week. Talk about why it is important and show they can implement this around the home.

6. Go Outside: 15 minutes

Some families do bike rides first thing in the morning before breakfast. Other families take daily walks after dinner. Some families take long hikes before lunch. Find what is the best rhythm for

your family. Get outside, at least once per day. It's good for your health and theirs. Not to mention, the best science education you can give a young child is to help them identify the trees, flowers, birds, insects where they live. When you are bored outside, see if you can use your senses: what do I see? what do I smell? what do I hear? what do I touch? what do I taste (use this sparingly)? See if you can follow where your senses lead you. Stay outside as long as your schedule allows, the more you read and learn with your child about nature and the world around you, the easier it will be for you and them to enjoy your time outdoors.

7. Free Play and Put Away: 15 minutes

Play, whether outdoors or indoors, is exceedingly important at this young age. Play is how children make sense of the world around them, test ideas, make connections, synthesize, and internalize their learning. It is their chance to develop their own personalities, opinions, ideas. It is their chance to learn social skills like sharing, waiting, fair play, taking turns. If you have an only child, you can help your children by playing with them just a few minutes everyday. The kind of play we are talking about here is mainly free play. No need to set up picture-perfect sensory bins or kitchen sets. Just give them a few simple toys (blocks, playdoh, legos, bottles, toy animals, crayons, paper, etc.), some space, and freedom to get dirty and try out their ideas. If you are playing with them, follow their lead. If you need a little help to get started, find a few simple board games that you enjoy playing with your children. Start with playing with your children for 5 minutes. Over time, they will be much better at playing and can do longer stretches, and soon enough, they will be able to play independently without you. As you read with your kids, you will also furnish their imagination and they will become better independent players.

Keep the play area simple and clean enough that your child can play and put away by himself. This may require some set up and training by you initially. First, every toy must have a designated place where the child will learn to put it away. The younger the child, the fewer the toys and the more help he may need. But as your child gets older, you can expand the number of toys and reduce your involvement in the putting away time.

8. Build one habit at a time.

These are seven daily habits that will set you up for preschool success. Build them into your day one habit at a time. Spend a few weeks (four to six weeks, usually) on establishing each habit before adding a new one. Once these habits are firmly in place, you will be able to

expand your preschooling and incorporate even more enriching learning experiences with your children.

We have created a list of resources to help you get started on your preschooling journey. Use it or modify it as you need to. There is no strict list of attainments any child has to have by any age. Every child is different and every home is different. Start simple, just begin by reading one good storybook with your child today. You can use these habits as the backbone of your homeschooling journey for pretty much any curriculum out there.



Little Things

*Little drops of water
Little grains of sand,
Make the mighty ocean,
And the pleasant land.*

*So the little moments,
Humble though they be,
Make the mighty ages
Of eternity.*

— Julia Carney, 1845

A GENTLE YEAR OF PRESCHOOL

A Charlotte Mason-Inspired Approach

Ages 2-3

Week	Phonics	Math	Life
1	Intro to ABC song	1-5 Counting Song	Days of the Week Song
2	Intro to ABC song	1-5 Counting Song	Days of the Week Song
3	Intro to ABC song	1-5 Counting Song	Days of the Week Song
4	Intro to ABC song	1-5 Counting Song	Days of the Week Song
5	Phonics alphabet song	1-10 Counting Song	Months of the Year Song
6	Phonics alphabet song	1-10 Counting Song	Months of the Year Song
7	Phonics alphabet song	1-10 Counting Song	Months of the Year Song
8	Phonics alphabet song	1-10 Counting Song	Months of the Year Song
9	A-H Alphabet Song	1-100 Counting Song	How's the weather?
10	A-H Alphabet Song	1-100 Counting Song	How's the weather?
11	A-H Alphabet Song	1-100 Counting Song	How's the weather?
12	A-H Alphabet Song	1-100 Counting Song	How's the weather?
13	I-P Alphabet Song	Shapes Song	Seasons Song
14	I-P Alphabet Song	Shapes Song	Seasons Song
15	I-P Alphabet Song	Shapes Song	Seasons Song
16	I-P Alphabet Song	Shapes Song	Seasons Song
17	Q-Z Alphabet Song	Color Song	Clean Up
18	Q-Z Alphabet Song	Color Song	Clean Up
19	Q-Z Alphabet Song	Color Song	Wash Hands
20	Q-Z Alphabet Song	Color Song	Wash Hands
21	Old MacDonald Had some vowels	Comparing: more, less	Brush Teeths

Week	Phonics	Math	Life
22	Old MacDonald Had some vowels	Comparing: more, less	Brush Teeths
23	Old MacDonald Had some vowels	Comparing: more, less	Please and Thank you
24	Old MacDonald Had some vowels	Comparing: more, less	Please and Thank you
25	Long Vowel Rap	Comparing: bigger, smaller	Everyone's Different
26	Long Vowel Rap	Comparing: bigger, smaller	Everyone's Different
27	Long Vowel Rap	Comparing: bigger, smaller	Saying Sorry
28	Long Vowel Rap	Comparing: bigger, smaller	Saying Sorry
29	Short Vowel Rap	Grouping: by color, by size	Kindness Song
30	Short Vowel Rap	Grouping: by color, by size	Kindness Song
31	Short Vowel Rap	Grouping: by color, by size	Being Friends Song
32	Short Vowel Rap	Grouping: by color, by size	Being Friends Song
33	And Sometimes Y	Patterning: by color, by size, by numbers, by letters	Emotions Song
34	And Sometimes Y	Patterning: by color, by size, by numbers, by letters	Emotions Song
35	And Sometimes Y	Patterning: by color, by size, by numbers, by letters	Many Ways to Say I Love You
36	And Sometimes Y	Patterning: by color, by size, by numbers, by letters	Many Ways to Say I Love You

A GENTLE YEAR OF PRESCHOOL

A Charlotte Mason-Inspired Approach

Ages 4-5

Week	Phonics	Math	Life
1	Bingo Phonics	Ordering: First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth	Wash your hands
2	Bingo Phonics	Ordering: First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth	Stinky Bad Breath
3	Bingo Phonics	Ordering: First through Tenth	Please Stop Hurting My Feelings
4	Bingo Phonics	Ordering: First through Tenth	What's Your Name
5	Consonant Rap B-H	Ordering: left, right, middle	The Table Manners Polka
6	Consonant Rap B-H	Ordering: left, right, middle	You're Only As Good As your Word
7	Consonant Rap B-H	Ordering: top, bottom, middle	What Will You Do With the Garbage
8	Consonant Rap B-H	Ordering: top, bottom, middle	The Mean Old Man
9	Consonant Rap J-R	Telling The Time : 0'clock	Hold The Door
10	Consonant Rap J-R	Telling The Time : 0'clock	You'll Be in Charge of Your Own Decisions
11	Consonant Rap J-R	Telling The Time : '30min	The Golden Rule
12	Consonant Rap J-R	Telling The Time : '30min	I Think I'm Going to Like Today
13	Consonant Rap S-Z	Number Line : 1 to 10 frog leap forward	Everybody's Fancy
14	Consonant Rap S-Z	Number Line : 1 to 10 frog leap forward	Let's Be Together Today
15	Consonant Rap S-Z	Number Line : 1 to 10 frog leap backward	I'm Taking Care of You
16	Number and Color Speling	Number Line : 1 to 10 frog leap backward	Then Your Heart is Full of Love
17	Number and Color Speling	10 frame : adding	It's You I Like
18	Number and Color Speling	10 frame : adding	You are Special
19	Number and Color Speling	10 frame : subtracting	It's the Style You Wear
20	Dolch Sight Words: Pre-K	10 frame : subtracting	Look and Listen

Week	Phonics	Math	Life
21	Dolch Sight Words: Pre-K	Money : pennies and nickels	Be Brave, Be Strong
22	Dolch Sight Words: Pre-K	Money : pennies and nickels	I'm Proud of You
23	Dolch Sight Words: Pre-K	Money : dimes	Sometimes isn't Always
24	Dolch Sight Words: Kindergarten	Money : dimes	Did You Know?
25	Dolch Sight Words: Kindergarten	Money : quarters	Won't you be my neighbor?
26	Dolch Sight Words: Kindergarten	Money : quarters	Just for once
27	Dolch Sight Words: Kindergarten	Money : making 1 dollar from coins	Tomorrow
28	Dolch Sight Words: Kindergarten	Money : making 1 dollar from coins	I Can Share
29	Short Vowel Rap	Money : making 1 dollar from coins	Learn to Say I'm Sorry
30	Short Vowel Rap	Money : making 1 dollar from coins	Boom Boom Aint It Great to be Crazy
31	Long Vowel Rap	Money : \$1, \$5	THank you song
32	Long Vowel Rap	Money : \$1, \$5	Use your words
33	Dr. Seuss Green Eggs and Ham	Money : making \$10, bills only	it's Such a good feeling!
34	Dr. Seuss Green Eggs and Ham	Money : making \$10, bills only	Close your eyes and think of something happy
35	Dr. Seuss Fox and Sox	Money : making \$10, bills only	We take care of each other
36	Dr. Seuss Fox and Sox	Money : making \$10, bills only	A different way is okay

A GENTLE YEAR OF PRESCHOOL

A CHARLOTTE MASON-
INSPIRED CURRICULUM

SEP

WEEK _____

MONDAY

☐

morning read aloud

TUESDAY

☐

morning read aloud

WEDNESDAY

☐

morning read aloud

THURSDAY

☐

morning read aloud

FRIDAY

☐

morning read aloud

SATURDAY

☐

SUNDAY

☐

NOTES:

OCT

WEEK _____

MONDAY

☐

morning read aloud

phonics time

TUESDAY

☐

morning read aloud

phonics time

WEDNESDAY

☐

morning read aloud

phonics time

THURSDAY

☐

morning read aloud

phonics time

FRIDAY

☐

morning read aloud

phonics time

SATURDAY

☐

SUNDAY

☐

NOTES:

NOV

WEEK _____

MONDAY

☐

morning read aloud

phonics time

go outside for a walk

TUESDAY

☐

morning read aloud

phonics time

go outside for a walk

WEDNESDAY

☐

morning read aloud

phonics time

go outside for a walk

THURSDAY

☐

morning read aloud

phonics time

go outside for a walk

FRIDAY

☐

morning read aloud

phonics time

go outside for a walk

SATURDAY

☐

SUNDAY

☐

NOTES:

DEC

WEEK _____

MONDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time

TUESDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time

WEDNESDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time

THURSDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time

FRIDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time

SATURDAY

☐

SUNDAY

☐

NOTES:

JAN

WEEK _____

MONDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
bedtime read aloud

TUESDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
bedtime read aloud

WEDNESDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
bedtime read aloud

THURSDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
bedtime read aloud

FRIDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
bedtime read aloud

SATURDAY

☐

SUNDAY

☐

NOTES:

FEB

WEEK _____

MONDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
bedtime read aloud

TUESDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
bedtime read aloud

WEDNESDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
bedtime read aloud

THURSDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
bedtime read aloud

FRIDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
bedtime read aloud

SATURDAY

☐

SUNDAY

☐

NOTES:

MAR

WEEK _____

MONDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

TUESDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

WEDNESDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

THURSDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

FRIDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

SATURDAY

☐

SUNDAY

☐

NOTES:

APR

WEEK _____

MONDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

TUESDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

WEDNESDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

THURSDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

FRIDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

SATURDAY

☐

nature walk / field trip

SUNDAY

☐

NOTES:

MAY

WEEK _____

MONDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

TUESDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

WEDNESDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

THURSDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

FRIDAY

☐

morning read aloud
phonics time
go outside for a walk
math time
free play + put away
kindness time
bedtime read aloud

SATURDAY

☐

nature walk / field trip
nature/ field trip journal

SUNDAY

☐

NOTES: