



Englisch

Starting kindergarten – requirements from a paediatrician's and school psychologist's perspective

Starting kindergarten is an important step in a child's life. Children who are aged four by 31st July enter kindergarten. Children develop differently and at their own pace. Kindergarten meets them at the stage they are in, helps them grow from there and supports them individually.



Step by step

During their first years of life, children become increasingly confident at being apart from their family for a while and exploring the outside world with curiosity. Playgroups and daycare provide an important setting for learning and practising this. At four years of age, most children will have developed the necessary physical, socio-emotional and intellectual prerequisites to be ready and open for the challenges of the new kindergarten environment and to master them well.

Requirements for a successful start at kindergarten

The child is ready to spend all morning, every morning, in a large group of children their own age and a little older, under the supervision of the kindergarten teacher. The experiences in kindergarten promote the further developmental steps appropriate to



the child's age. This works best when the child can take part with all their senses in free play as well as guided lessons. For this reason, during the 4-year checkup, the paediatrician / family doctor checks whether the child can see and hear well or whether they need glasses or a hearing aid.

To ensure a successful start to kindergarten, children should mostly fulfil the following requirements. Whether or not the child is ready for kindergarten is determined by **the overall picture** of their development, **not the individual points**.

Physical requirements

- ▶ The child is alert and receptive in the morning, so they can actively participate in the kindergarten programme. This requires sufficiently long, undisturbed sleep at night.
- ▶ The child no longer needs bottled food and eats breakfast in the morning to replenish their energy levels.
- ▶ The child is able to walk to kindergarten.
- ▶ The child can unpack and eat their morning snack themselves.
- ▶ The child realises when they need to go to the toilet and can go to the toilet themselves with a little help (e.g. unbuttoning their trousers).

Good to know: Experts today believe that children develop best and are best supported and challenged when the environment suits the child's stage of development.

- ▶ The child has basic skills in and demonstrates some competence at running, hopping, climbing stairs, as well as drawing, cutting, washing hands, blowing their nose and putting on and removing clothes and shoes.

Social and emotional requirements

- ▶ The child can be apart from their caregivers for a whole morning. They no longer need a dummy.
- ▶ The child tries to express their needs in a way others can understand.
- ▶ The child tries to make contact with other children and teachers appropriately.
- ▶ The child understands rules and tries to follow them.
- ▶ The child tries to resolve conflict without violence.
- ▶ The child has the confidence to try again after making a mistake.
- ▶ The child can be consoled.



Intellectual requirements

- ▶ The child observes and can follow instructions in movement games, crafts and drawing.
- ▶ The child responds to teachers and can understand and carry out simple tasks.
- ▶ The child can stay engaged in their play, wait for their turn, and be patient while playing with others.

Starting kindergarten early

The law does not allow children to start kindergarten early.

Starting kindergarten later

It is rarely in the child's interest to start kindergarten at a later date due to their developmental stage. This is because progress in a child's development requires active promotion. In other words, the child would need individual support during this time. Children who start kindergarten later are also up to one year older, and larger and stronger than their peers in the same kindergarten class, which can often lead to social and emotional difficulties. In individual cases, an application to postpone kindergarten therefore needs to be submitted to the district school authority. The school doctor or school psychologist may be consulted for a second opinion. A doctor's certificate may also be required in some school districts.

Skipping or repeating a kindergarten year

Kindergarten generally lasts two years. In exceptional cases, depending on the child's intellectual or personal development, transition to primary school may be possible already after one year or only after three years.

Out of school hours care

Spending a full day including mealtimes in a large, mixed-age group of children without their parents is a challenge for children of kindergarten age. Depending on the child's prior experience and personality, this can be a stimulating or an overwhelming experience. Give your child time to gradually get used to the new form of care.

Special educational measures

Special educational measures include speech and language therapy, special educational needs support or psychomotor therapy. If a child requires special educational measures when starting kindergarten, an application may be submitted to the competent school district authority. Otherwise, the child's need for such measures may be discussed with the parents during the course of kindergarten.

What can parents do?

Parents support their children when they encourage them to become independent and trust in their ability to learn. Teach them that conflict and

failure are just as much part of the learning process as positive experiences. From the outset, an open attitude towards teachers and school is an important foundation for the child's progress at school.

Dialogue

Talk to the teacher promptly if you have any concerns.

The school medical or school psychological service, the competent school district authority or other professionals (e.g. your paediatrician, involved learning support staff or therapists) may also be consulted depending on the situation.

