

Who Is the Kindergarten Child?

Kindergarten children have a growing sense of independence. Yet they also may be somewhat anxious as they branch out to new horizons. Five- and six-year-olds can be very enthusiastic about their endeavors. When given adequate support, they love new places, new ideas and new bits of information. Remember that as five-year-old children become six-year-olds, changes will occur rapidly in their growth and development.

Physical Development

Kindergarteners abound with energy. Their new abilities in balance and coordination allow them to ride a bike with training wheels, swim, jump rope and play most ball games. They can also use their fingers to control writing and painting tools as well as manage zippers, buttons and shoelaces. You can expect your kindergarteners to:

- appear restless even when seated.
- have short attention spans or be easily distracted by things in the environment around them.
- enjoy boisterous play.
- be continuing to develop coordination skills.
- be quite good at large motor skills such as clapping, hopping and skipping while they are talking or singing.
- be continuing to develop fine motor skills; cutting is a skill that needs practice.

Cognitive Development and Learning Skills

Kindergarteners are creative and enthusiastic problem solvers. They are eager to learn more about the world and how it works. They are able to gather information and carry out simple investigations. Hands-on experiences help them discover “how” and “why” things happen. You can expect your kindergarteners to:

- learn best through touch, exploration and movement; through activities that engage the whole child, and through the presentation of concepts one at a time.
- display increased ability to sequence things in time and enjoy hearing about the past.
- enjoy dress-up, fantasy stories and puppet plays.
- be interested in expanding beyond themselves and their immediate families.
- favor show-and-tell as a favorite activity.





Language Development

Kindergarteners begin to extend their oral language skills to reading and writing. They use increasingly descriptive language to share information, ask questions and provide explanations. You can expect your kindergarteners to:

- display emerging reading skills.
- pronounce words clearly.
- have a good size vocabulary that continues to grow rapidly.
- be able to wait their turn to speak during group conversations.
- be able to discuss stories and tell their own tales.



Social and Emotional Development

Kindergarteners become more social as they prefer activities that involve other children. They can handle feelings and social situations with greater independence. They may even choose to go to another room to calm down or try negotiating before asking for an adult to help. Fitting in and being accepted by the group is becoming more and more important. You can expect your kindergarteners to:

- get along well with all classmates.
- begin to understand rules, the concepts of winning/losing and working together.
- have difficulty losing, possibly walking away from a team game and pouting when losing.
- view the teacher as always right.
- seek affirmation of their abilities.
- play best in pairs rather than in larger groups.



Spiritual Growth and Development

Kindergarten is a wonderful time for teachers and catechists to support families in developing the Catholic Identity of their children. It is a time to celebrate simple rituals and the traditions of the Church. Kindergarten is a time to introduce the children to a beginning faith vocabulary and provide a readiness for future catechesis in the faith of the Catholic Church. You can expect your kindergarteners to:

- have a natural sense of wonder and awe that fosters sensitivity to the sacred.
- imagine God as a human person.
- experience God's love through parents or guardians and other family members.
- have a natural tendency for prayer and enjoy ceremony and ritual.
- be comfortable with both formal and spontaneous prayer.
- interpret Bible stories and other stories literally, be unable to derive the symbolic meaning.