



*Tionscadal Léirithe um Theiripe ar Scoil agus Tacaíocht na Luathbhlianta*  
**Demonstration Project on In-school and Early Years Therapy Support**

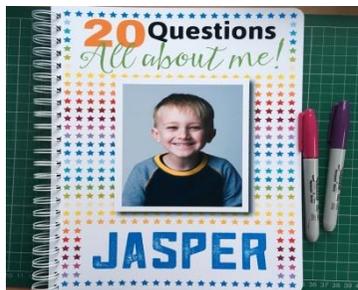
# Preparing for Primary School



## Give the primary school important information



- Tell the principal and teacher if your child has any identified needs, diagnosis, or health needs.
  - Give copies of any reports to the school.
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- You could create a scrapbook with your child called “All About Me”. This can include information about:
    - Areas of strength (e.g. I am good at playing sports/ taking turns etc.)
    - Areas of difficulty (e.g. I find it hard to make new friends/ tie my shoes etc.)
    - What your child likes and dislikes (e.g. favourite and least favourite activities, foods, games etc.)



## Prepare your child for the change

- Familiarise your child with the school building (e.g. walk or drive by, point out and name the school).



- Meet with your child's teacher if possible or tell your child the teacher's name.
- Visit the school's website and look at relevant photos or videos.



- Try on the school uniform in advance.
- Involve your child in choosing a school bag/lunch box/pencil case. (e.g. your child may choose a bag that has his/her favourite colour or character, you could decorate a plain lunch box with stickers etc.).
- Make sure that the school bag/lunch box etc. are easy to open and close.



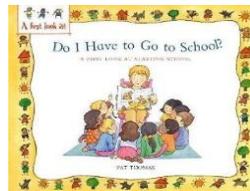
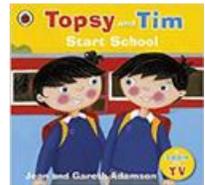
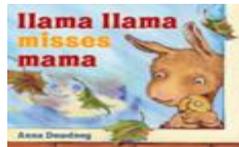
- Speak *positively* about school (children will pick up on your anxieties)



- Talk about your favourite things about school when you were small.
- Relate school subjects/activities to your child's interests (e.g. if your child likes football, talk about the school's gym and pitches etc.)

- Read stories about starting school. Remember that you can find and order books from your local library! There are lots of books to choose from but here are some examples:

- Llama Llama Misses Mama
- Topsy and Tim Start School
- Charlie Chick Goes to School
- Do I Have to Go to School?
- Harry and the Dinosaurs Go to School
- Come to School Too, Blue Kangaroo!

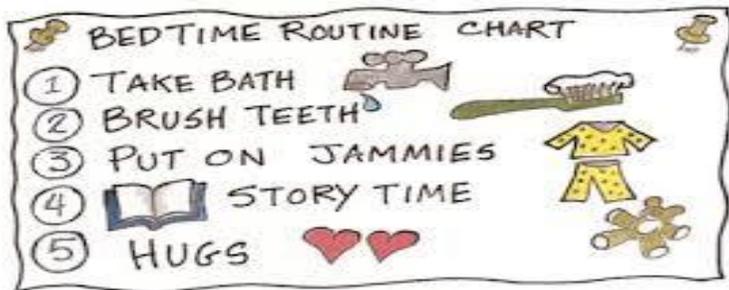


- Create your own scrapbook or story about your child's new school with photos of and comments about the building, the school uniform, who they know in the school (e.g. siblings, neighbours, and friends from preschool).

## Routines

Get into morning and evening routines at least 2 weeks before school starts. Gradually put your child to bed earlier at night time over those 2 weeks to help embed the new routine and to ensure that your child is rested for starting school.

Set a **regular bedtime routine** that will allow your child to wake up fresh and ready for the day. The 30 minutes before bed should ideally be calm, with no screen time (phones, tablets, tv), and should ideally follow a set sequence of steps, for example: bath, teeth, pyjamas, story, bed.



Practice the **morning routine** of getting up early, having breakfast, putting on your child's uniform and packing the school bag. Try to have everything ready the night before to reduce stress and rushing.

SCHOOL DAYS MORNING		
	Wake Up & Eat Breakfast	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Brush Teeth	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Comb Hair	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Get Dressed	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Put On Shoes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Make Bed	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Get Lunch & Backpack	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Go To School	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Healthy Habits

- **Limit screen time** to less than 1 hour a day.
- Alternatives to screen time:

### **SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN (UP TO AGE EIGHT)**

Through playing, children learn about teamwork and following rules. They can now organise objects, ideas and skills in logical, interconnected ways.

#### **School-age toys:**

- Board games
- Construction tools
- Science equipment
- Items for "collections"
- Modeling and craft materials
- Tools for dramatic performances and storytelling
- Materials for creating small worlds like dollhouses and castles

Source: <https://www.kettler.co.uk/screen-free-learning/>

Children need a **minimum of 60 minutes of intensive physical activity** daily (e.g. cycling, walking the dog, running, games, playground, dancing, soccer, swimming, walk/ cycle/scoot to school).

#### Benefits of physical activity:

- Improves sleep
- Reduces anxiety and stress levels
- Improves social skills
- Improves concentration
- Helps to develop a healthy body
- Improves self-esteem and self-confidence
- Helps to develop coordination and movement skills



## When your child starts school:



### First Day:

- Have everything ready the night before (e.g. school bag, uniform, what your child will have for breakfast).
- Leave plenty of time so you arrive a few minutes before the bell rings.
- Reassure your child and remind him/her of all the things he/she knows about the new school.
- Try not to let your child see if you are upset.
- Don't hang around for too long on the first morning as this could unsettle your child.
- Make sure your child knows who will be collecting him/her and where (e.g. at the school door/gate etc.).

### Going forward:

- If you have any concerns about your child, contact the school immediately (don't wait!).
- Find the best way to communicate with your child's teacher if needed. For example:
  - Communication diary: Parent and teacher put notes in a diary or notebook about what went well at home/in school, any concerns, and/or important information.
  - Arrange a meeting with the teacher through the school's secretary.
- Attend courses or parent meetings offered by the school.
- Arrange for your child to arrive and be collected on time.

## Milestones – aged 5 years old



### ***Use My Body***

- Stand confidently on either leg
- Hop with both legs
- Run up and down stairs using one foot per step
- Walk on narrow line
- Skip on alternate feet
- Throw and catch a ball well (catching with 2 hands)
- Enjoy ball skills within games

### ***Independence Skills***

- Undress and dress alone (may need help with small buttons, zips)
- Blow nose
- Wash and dry face and hands
- Use knife and fork
- Use toilet independently



### ***Use My Hands***

- Draw recognisable person with head, trunk, legs, arms; house with door, windows, roof, chimney
- Draw a recognisable face with eyes, nose, mouth
- Cut a strip of paper with scissors
- Good control in drawing and painting using appropriate pencil grip
- Copy shapes – circle, cross, square and triangle
- Lace a sewing card using a running stitch
- Colour pictures neatly, staying within outlines



### **Understanding**

- Understands instructions with time and sequence (e.g. first, then, last)
- Understands adjectives (e.g. soft, hard, smooth)
- Enjoys being read to and follows a simple story without pictures
- Enjoys telling stories and acting them out in detail, alone or with friends
- Enjoys jokes and riddles



### **Talking**

- Communicates in sentences
- Grammar is still developing (e.g. I goed to the cinema)
- Gives full name, age, address and usually birthday
- Can explain an object's use (e.g. a crayon is something you colour with)
- Enjoys reciting or singing rhymes and jingles
- Asks meaning of unfamiliar words and may also use them

### **Social skills**

- Follows tidiness routines but needs constant reminders
- Shows a definite sense of humour
- Enjoys imaginative play
- Understands meaning of time in relation to daily routine
- Protective towards younger children and pets
- Comforts playmates who are upset



### **Speech**

- May still have some difficulty with 'ch', 'j', 'r' and 's' sounds

**Adapted from:**  
Mary Sheridan (2014)  
*I Can* (2007) and  
[talkingpoint.org.uk](http://talkingpoint.org.uk)

## Top Tips to Develop Your Child's Skills

The more your child practices relevant skills at home the more he/she will be prepared to participate in real world situations in school.

Try to introduce these skills naturally during your child's day at home.



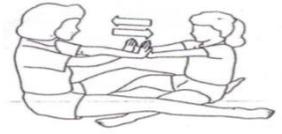
### Encourage self-care skills and independence:

- Practice dressing skills during quiet times, e.g. at weekends.
- Encourage your child to take off/put on own coat/shoes.
- Get your child to carry and open and close his/her own schoolbag. Get him/her to put in and take out lunchbox and books when needed rather than the parent doing it.
- Teach your child how to wash his/her hands by showing how to use the soap, rub hands together and dry them with a towel.
- Practice opening and closing lunch box and drink bottle.
- Write your child's name on their school bag, books, coat, uniform and lunchbox.
- Encourage your child to complete toileting tasks independently.
- Try to get clothes and bags etc which your child can easily manage (e.g. Velcro shoes, bag with one zip pocket only).
- Use a reward chart and some stickers to motivate your child to practice these independence skills.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
 Wash hands					
 Put on coat					
 Put on shoes					
 Put books in bag					

## Develop gross motor skills (using big muscles in the body):

- Wheelbarrow Games e.g. races and walking over cushions and mats.
- Pushing and Pulling games:
  - pushing each other's hands
  - pushing each other's feet
  - tug-of-war
- Animal walks: Bunny hop, duck waddle, seal, crab walk. Race and walk following simple routes around furniture, play Crab football (kick the ball with feet).



- Obstacle courses; climbing up and over, crawling through, sliding down, spinning around, running around cones, ball games etc.



- Ball games: With younger children, start with a balloon. Catch and throw a medium sized soft ball standing close together- move further apart as the child masters each distance, throw a bean bag or ball at, or into a target, e.g. skittles, wall target.
- General Activities including use of playground equipment, trampolines, space-hoppers, play Simon Says, rolling and jumping games.
- Extra-curricular activities such as swimming, gymnastics, Taekwondo.



### Develop fine motor skills (using small muscles in the hands):

Posture: At home, think about how your child is sitting when doing activities such as colouring, cutting or using cutlery. Try to ensure their feet are flat on the floor or resting on a surface. Pop a box under their feet if necessary.



Strengthen hands and finger grips:

- Playdough
- Building activities such as blocks and lego
- Use clothes pegs - hang up pictures on a line or pick up cotton wool balls



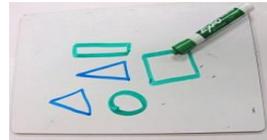
Scissors activities:

- Get some small child-sized scissors and show your child how to hold them
- Cut along thick lines on paper and cut playdough with scissors



Pencil activities:

- Drawing and colouring activities
- Drawing lines and shapes



Top tip! Give your child very short crayons if they have difficulty holding their pencil correctly.

## How to Hold a Pencil

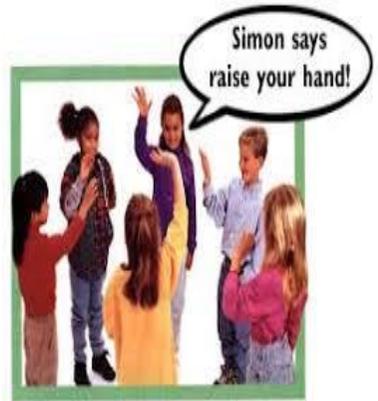
1. Put your thumb and forefinger about 3 cm above the coned end of the pencil.  
2. Let the pencil rest between your thumb and forefinger.  
3. Then put your middle finger underneath for support.

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The diagram shows a right hand holding a yellow pencil. Three numbered circles are placed on the hand to indicate the correct grip: circle 1 is on the thumb, circle 2 is on the forefinger, and circle 3 is on the middle finger. The pencil is held between the thumb and forefinger, with the middle finger supporting it from below.

## Develop communication skills:

**Play listening games:** Listening games help to build children's attention skills and encourage them to follow longer instructions. These skills are very important when understanding and learning in the classroom. Examples of listening games are 'Simon Says' & 'Run and Touch'.



**Repeat repeat repeat!** Repeating words lots of times and in a variety of different sentences and situations helps children to learn. Think of when you were learning a foreign language in school- you needed lots of repetition!

**Show them the right way:** It's normal for young children to make mistakes in their speech and language. If your child makes a mistake, say the word or sentence again correctly for your child to hear but without directly correcting him/her. Give the correct model more than once if possible so that your child hears the right way several times.

### Speech example:



### Language example:





### Use everyday routines:

Children can learn a lot from talking about everyday events. For example, let your child help you unpack the groceries, put laundry in the washing machine or use a plastic knife to cut up fruit. Encourage conversation by talking about what you are doing and why. Mealtimes are also a great time to chat!



**Recite nursery rhymes together:** Use a slow pace when saying rhymes so that your child can hear all the words and join in more easily. Use lots of actions and facial expressions to make the rhymes fun!



### Read stories with your child:



- Use books with lots of pictures.
- Try to guess what the story is about by looking at the title and pictures on the cover.
- Read the story using an interesting voice and lots of facial expression!
- Explain new words that you come across.
- Develop your child's story-telling skills by encouraging him/her to talk about the pictures and asking questions to get him/her thinking about the story.

**Play with your child:** Follow your child's lead during play so that you know it is something that he/she likes! Chat with your child about what you are playing and use your imaginations in pretend play!



## References and Useful Links

- <http://www.limerickchildcare.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Ambitions-for-Transitions-A-Guide-to-Support-Every-Childs-Progression-from-Early-Years-Services-to-Primary-School.pdf>
- <http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie>
- <https://www.kettler.co.uk/screen-free-learning/>
- Talking Point: <http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/>
- Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (IASLT): <http://www.iaslt.ie/documents/public-information/>
- Sheridan, Mary (2014). From Birth to Five Years.