Ready. Set. Grow!

family guide

First 5 LA’s Website for Parents / www.ReadySetGrowLA.org
Making the Most of Summer!

It can be tempting to just kick back in the summer and enjoy the sunshine and some long, lazy days. But fall is just around the corner, and there is a lot to do to be ready for school — whether your child is in preschool or making the big leap to kindergarten!

Learning begins the day a baby is born, and his brain is nearly 90 percent developed by age 5. You are his first teacher and can help him learn the skills he needs for kindergarten, from his ABCs to his 123s and beyond! Enrolling your child in high-quality preschool or child care is the best way to help him do well in school — and in life.

Inside this Family Guide you’ll find tips to get, and keep, children on the right path to school success.

You’ll learn what a quality preschool looks like, which vaccinations are needed before your child can start school and what it means to be ready for school. We haven’t forgotten that families need some fun this summer, so you’ll discover delicious recipes, coupons to family-friendly attractions in Los Angeles County, how to make the most of swimming with your young child and events the whole family will enjoy.

First 5 LA’s Parent Helpline 1-888-FIRST5-LA (1-888-347-7855) Free. Easy. For all Families.
Kindergarten teachers expect (and hope!) that, come fall, new students arrive with some basic skills, like knowing their ABCs and 123s. But kindergarten teachers also look for other developmental milestones and abilities. Some may surprise you, but most are skills you and your child have worked on since birth. Here are some behaviors a child will show on the path to kindergarten:

**Ready for School**

Ages and Stages

**age 1**

- Knows her name and understands when she is being spoken to
- Is becoming familiar with books and being read to
- Understands simple requests
- Says his first word
- Understands facial expressions
- Responds to someone else’s distress by showing his own, or crying

**age 2**

- Answers simple questions
- Scribbles with crayons
- Enjoys being read to and may have some favorite books
- Can flip through a book page by page
- Knows her first name and can say it when asked
- Communicates simple needs like hunger, pain and thirst
age 3

• Enjoys listening to and talking about books
• Knows her full name, how old she is and if she is a boy or a girl
• Understands and follows two-step directions
• Dresses herself
• Uses words to express emotions (for example: “I am sad.”)
• Copies a circle
• Eats by herself

age 4

• “Reads” favorite books by memory
• Is aware that letters make sounds
• Cuts out a picture with scissors
• Hops on one foot
• Understands and follows a series of directions
• Shares and takes turns
On To Kindergarten!

There are some skills that kindergarten teachers may not expect your child to know, but she may ask about or watch for these:

- Knows left from right
- Has memorized home phone number and address
- Ties shoes, buttons pants and zips jackets
- Opens a water bottle
- Shows self-control by listening attentively or waiting patiently for a turn
- Shows excitement about learning
- Has mastered the pincer grasp (using the thumb and forefinger)
- Colors inside the lines and makes drawings that resemble real things

Remember: Every child develops at his own pace. These are just guidelines. If you have any questions or concerns, talk with your child’s doctor.
Choosing the Right High-Quality Preschool

Like everything these days, from how we like our coffee to what kind of car we drive, preschools come in many varieties. Studies show that choosing “high quality” programs for young children will give them a better chance at success in school. But with so many options, how are parents to know which program is best?

The first step in choosing a high-quality preschool is to know your child. Is he outgoing? Does he feel comfortable in large groups? Does she prefer quiet or active play? Does he have a good attention span? Can he focus on an activity for a long period of time? Keep your child in mind while evaluating a program and asking questions of the staff. Little things like a big play yard or a dress up area may be features you know will make your child happy.

Knowing that a child generally starts preschool around age 3, it is best to start early when looking for a program. Here are some things to find out about a school:

- Ask to see the school’s state license to be sure it meets health and safety regulations.
- Learn about teachers’ educational backgrounds. Ideally, they will have specialized training in early childhood education.
- Ask about the school’s child/teacher ratio. The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends one adult for every 10 children, which means more individual attention for your child.

First 5 LA sponsors Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP), a non profit organization dedicated to making voluntary, high-quality preschool available to every 4-year-old in L.A. County. To find out more, visit www.laup.net or call 213-416-1200.
Look for a Well-Rounded Program

• Look for a program that provides a variety of activities adjusted to children’s developmental stages and needs (see pages 3-5), such as hands-on learning, teacher instruction, group and individual projects, as well as active play time.

• Make sure the preschool teaches basic school readiness skills including the alphabet, numbers, shapes and colors.

• Check that the program has plenty of age-appropriate books, toys and other materials that encourage creativity and promote literacy.

Ask about Parent/Teacher Collaboration

Working together with preschool teachers can help strengthen your child’s ability to learn.

• Ask parents at the preschool about how teachers communicate with them. It benefits your child when teachers and parents share information about her progress, favorite activities and learning style.

• Ask about the program’s discipline policy to make sure it is similar to your own. Having different rules at home and at school can be confusing for young children.

There are many different types of preschools with a wide range of costs (including some that are free!). Some offer full-day and some offer half-day care, which is great for kindergartners, too.

To locate and learn about these programs, visit the Family Guide Summer 2011 Resource Page at www.ReadySetGrowLA.org/ReadyToLearn or call the First 5 LA free Parent Helpline at 1-888-FIRST5-LA (1-888-347-7855).
California parents with young children should know that their children may not be starting kindergarten when they expect them to. That’s because a new state law changed the age children begin kindergarten and establishes “transitional kindergarten” for younger kids.

Lawmakers listened to early-learning advocates, who said the younger 5-year-olds may not be socially, emotionally, developmentally or academically ready for kindergarten — and struggle because of it. In response, the cut-off date to begin school was changed from Dec. 1 to Sept. 1 — meaning that some kids who turn 5 after Sept. 1 may not begin kindergarten until the following fall.

Transitional kindergartens will offer developmentally-appropriate curriculum that is aligned with kindergarten standards and taught by credentialed teachers. The classes will be a part of the public school system and are free for families.

Some exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis if the parent or guardian requests early kindergarten admission, and school officials agree it would benefit the child.

To learn how to contact your school district and to find out more information, call the First 5 LA Parent Helpline at 1-888-FIRST5-LA (1-888-347-7855) or visit the Family Guide Resource Page at www.ReadySetGrowLA.org/ReadyToLearn.

New State Program Begins in 2012!
So begins the children’s book “Potter the Otter: A Tale About Water.” This fun and educational bilingual book, which First 5 LA is giving away for free, is about Potter letting all his juice and soda-drinking animal friends know that water is best to drink.

Healthy habits begin early, and “Potter the Otter” is a great tool for parents and caregivers to use in talking with young children about healthier drink choices. The average 4-year-old consumes 17 teaspoons of added sugar a day — which adds up to 65 pounds of sugar a year! Most of that sugar comes from fruit drinks, high-fat desserts, soft drinks and candy. With more and more children becoming overweight or obese, choosing water over sugary drinks is one simple way to limit extra calories.

Potter the Otter offers these tips for kids:

• Drink water when you are thirsty — it is the best choice.
• Fill a pitcher with water and add fresh fruit slices for more flavor.
• Limit juice to four to six ounces per day (less than one juice box). Even 100 percent fruit juice contains sugar and should be limited.
• Drink low-fat or non-fat milk with meals.

Thousands of copies of “Potter the Otter” are already in children’s hands, and First 5 LA is giving away more books. To find out how to get your free copy and to learn more about Rethink Your Drink visit www.ReadySetGrowLA.org
Take the Plunge!

It’s hot out there! Luckily, there are lots of great public swimming pools in Los Angeles County where families can cool off and have fun being active.

Here are some ways to get the most of your swim time with your infant or toddler, once she can hold her head up by herself (around six months old):

- Bring floating bath toys, like a rubber ducky or boat, into the pool. While firmly holding your baby or child, encourage him to “swim” to the toy by reaching with his hands and kicking his feet.

- Hold your baby with her back to your chest so she is facing out, and use her hands, legs and whole body to do the “Hokey Pokey.”

- Try holding your baby in different positions while you sing “Motorboat.” Spin in a circle, starting slow. Go faster and then speed it up when you “step on the gas.” (Here are the words: “Motorboat, motorboat going slow. Motorboat, motorboat going fast. Motorboat, motorboat STEP ON THE GAS!”)

So grab your hats, sunscreen and towels and check out these public pools:

- **Banning Pool:** 1450 N. Avalon Blvd., Wilmington, 90744 · 310-548-7420 banning.pool@lacity.org
  Hours: Call or email for schedule
  Cost: **FREE** for youth under 17, $2.50 for adults or $2 for adults showing a library card.

- **Hansen Dam Aquatic Center:**
  11798 Foothill Blvd., Lake View Terrace, 91342 · 818-899-3779
  Hours: 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. daily, waterslide open 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.
  Cost: **FREE** for youth under 17, $2.50 for adults or $2 with a library card.

- **John C. Argue Expo Center:**
  3990 S. Menlo Ave., Los Angeles, 90037 · 213-763-0129
  Hours: 1-4:30 p.m. daily
  Cost: **FREE** for youth under 17, $2.50 for adults or $2 with a library card.
  Other: Lap and shallow wading pools

Don’t take your child in the water unless you feel comfortable swimming. Need swimming lessons for you or your child? For information on lessons or additional public pools, call the First 5 LA free Parent Helpline at 1-888-FIRST5-LA (1-888-347-7855) or visit www.ReadySetGrowLA.org/ReadyToLearn
There is a lot of information out there, some good — and some bad — about vaccinations. Some shots are required for school, while others are not. You want to do what’s right for your child, but how do you know what that is?

Health.com recently explored 12 truths and lies about vaccines. Here are a few you might find helpful:

**FALSE:** Vaccines cause autism. A small 1998 study, which was later deemed to be a fraud, caused a lot of panic for parents after wrongly reporting a connection between the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism. Since then, several scientific studies have found no link between the MMR vaccine and autism.

**TRUE:** Vaccines can have side effects. The most common side effects are soreness where the shot was received and fever, which are best treated by acetaminophen or ibuprofen in young children. A less common side effect is seizures. Some children are at greater risk for side effects.

**FALSE:** Vaccines guarantee protection from illness. No vaccine can boast a 100 percent guarantee against disease, but they help a lot — especially in reducing the severity of an illness. Experts agree that the more people who are vaccinated, the safer it is for everyone.

For more information about vaccines, including a chart on those recommended for children from birth through 6 and which ones are required for school, visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines or call toll free 800-232-4636.

See all the websites and resources mentioned in this guide in one place at the Family Guide Resource Page: www.ReadySetGrowLA.org/ReadyToLearn
BACK TO SCHOOL

Draw the school house by connecting the dots.
Then color by letter.

A = BROWN
B = YELLOW
C = RED
D = BLUE
E = GREEN

Creative Quesadillas
The best thing about quesadillas is the cheese, of course! But there are so many ways to make them (stove top, microwave, oven, grill) and so many things to put in them — they are sure to be a yummy, healthy treat for even your hungriest (and pickiest) after-school snacker. Fill a tortilla, preferably wheat, with any kind of cheese, plus one (or more!) of these other ingredients for a tasty snack:
- Thinly-sliced apples or pears
- Sliced olives
- Small pieces of lunch meat
- Tomato chunks
- Rice
- Sauteed potato slices
- Shredded carrot
- Mango pieces
Get creative with leftovers! Cooked meats and vegetables are great chopped up in quesadillas.

Fruit Dippers
Kids love to dip. Encourage them to eat fruits and vegetables by turning sour cream or plain yogurt into a fun dip. Sprinkle it with cinnamon and sugar for a sweeter treat, or add dashes of lime juice and seasoning (like onion or garlic powder) for a tangy flavor. Ask your child what his favorite flavor is and you’re sure to find inspiration.

Are you a new parent or know someone who is (or will be)? All parents could benefit from the Kit for New Parents. This free Kit has information on prenatal care, early childhood development, nutrition, health, safety, child care and more. The Kit is available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean. Call 1-800-KIDS-025 (1-800-543-7025) or visit www.ccfc.ca.gov/kit.asp.
2nd Saturday Art Walk
July 9, Aug. 13 and Sept. 10 · 4 – 10 p.m.
Linden Avenue, First Street, Broadway, Fourth Street and Elm Avenue in Downtown Long Beach 90802
Cost: Free
www.ArtWalkLB.com
Enjoy artists’ exhibits, live music and art activities for kids.

6th Annual Target Feria de la Familia
Sunday July 24 · Noon – 6 p.m.
Plaza de la Raza
3540 North Mission Rd., Los Angeles, CA 90031
Cost: Free
Join this free celebration of the finest traditions in Latino art and culture. The event will feature music and dance performances, youth workshops, art activities.

Family Nature Walk
Saturday mornings · 9 - 11 a.m.
Eaton Canyon Natural Area
1750 N. Altadena Dr., Pasadena 91107
Cost: Free
Families gather outdoors for a guided walk in Eaton Canyon Natural area. The hike is appropriate for small children. Walking shoes, sunscreen, water and a hat are recommended. Participants should meet in front of the Nature Center building.

Antelope Valley Fair & Alfalfa Festival
August 19 – 28
Antelope Valley Fairgrounds
2551 W. Ave. H., Lancaster, CA 93536
Cost: Adults $9, Children under 6 are Free
www.avfair.com
The Antelope Valley Fair & Alfalfa Festival has been part of the Antelope Valley for 70 years. Traditional events like the Rural Olympics, Junior Livestock Auction and Home Arts exhibit competitions continue to involve the community in one-of-a-kind, fun events.

Big! World! Fun! Family Series
Saturdays through August 27 · 10 a.m.
John Anson Ford Amphitheatre
2580 Cahuenga Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90068 · 323-461-3673
Cost: Adults $5, Children: Free
www.fordamphitheater.org
The series features an hour-long music, dance and theatre performances for children ages 4 to 10 and their families. Includes pre-show craft projects and a chance to meet the performers after the show.

One World, Many Stories
Summer Reading Club 2011
June 11 – August 13
www.lapl.org/
For the first time this summer, the Los Angeles Public Library’s Summer Reading Club will include children 0 - 4 and their families. Parents and children will have a “check list” of activities to do together, like naming fruits and vegetables in the grocery store or attending a library story time. When all the tasks are complete, a librarian will give you and your child a free book, and a chance to win a prize.
$1 Splash Mondays
Mondays all summer
10 a.m. – 8 p.m.
(excluding holidays)
Annenberg Community
Beach House
415 Pacific Coast Hwy.,
Santa Monica, CA 90402 · 310-458-4904
Cost: $1
http://beachhouse.smgov.net
Come swim all day for just $1! With spectacular views, a splash pad, children’s play area, gallery, historic pool and Marion Davies Guest House, there’s something for everyone to enjoy at the Beach House!

Ecosystems Exhibit
Through January 17 · 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
California Science Center
700 Exposition Park Dr.,
Los Angeles, CA 90037 · 323-724-3623
Cost: Free
www.californiasciencecenter.org
Explore the varied ecosystems of land and sea, and discover how the physical and living worlds are shaped in similar ways. Ecosystems invites you to explore environments that range from ordinary to extraordinary.

Port of Los Angeles Lobsterfest
September 17-19
Friday: 5 - 11 p.m.
Saturday: 11 a.m. - 11 p.m.
Sunday: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Cost: $9, Children 12 and under free
There’s more than just lobster – this festival includes free musical entertainment, a pirate show, carnival rides and plenty of entertainment for kids.
Free parking and shuttle.

Abbot Kinney Festival
September 25 · 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Abbot Kinney Boulevard
Venice, CA
Cost: Free
www.abbotkinney.org
Included in the KidsQuad area are healthy snack creations by Piccolo Chef, children’s gardening by Little Saplings, jewelry making by Ecommunity Arts, exotic wildlife mobile exhibit by STAR ECO Station and a performance/activity area just for toddlers called Tot Lot.

Even more for you and your family.
Visit www.ReadySetGrowLA.org for additional resources, tips, games and activities for the whole family.
Great DEALS!

Sign up to receive more great deals at www.ReadySetGrowLA.org

Save $2 off adult, $1 off child IMAX admission tickets.

Present this coupon at the California Science Center IMAX Theater box office to receive this Ready.Set.Grow! discount. Discount for children ages 3-11 (free admission for children under 3). This coupon is valid until 12/31/11 for a maximum of six tickets per coupon. Not valid with any other discounts, multi-show purchases or special presentations. For more information about Ready.Set.Grow! visit www.ReadySetGrowLA.org or call 1-888-First5-LA.

For information and show times visit our website www.californiasciencecenter.org or call (323) SCI-ENCE

CODE: F-LA

Visit Noah’s Ark, one of Southern California’s most family-friendly and inspiring destinations.

On Saturdays and Sundays, families are welcome to dig into the Skirball’s simulated outdoor archaeological dig and field laboratory.

Valid for up to nine tickets per user per day. Advance tickets are recommended on weekends, all Thursdays and during school holidays. www.skirball.org or (877) SCC-4TIX. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Minimum adult/child ratio is 1 to 4.

Visit AdventurePlex and receive HALF OFF admission!

AdventurePlex is South Bay’s premier youth fitness destination offering award-winning services and programs for youth, teens and families. We make fitness fun!

Facility Highlights
- 4-level play structure
- Rock climbing walls
- FitPlex gym
- Sports Court
- AdventureCamp
- Ropes course
- Custom birthday parties
- Classes and more!

AdventurePlex has been voted #1 in the categories of Best Kids Camps, Best Play Facility and Best Birthday.

First 5 LA is a child-advocacy organization created by California voters to invest tobacco tax revenues in programs for improving the lives of children in Los Angeles County, from prenatal through age 5. First 5 LA champions health, education and safety causes concerning young children and families.