

How to Create a Preschooler Schedule That Will Help Them THRIVE

With limited patience and BIG energies, it can be very difficult to find activities that will keep your kids engaged all day long. And with the first five years being crucial to kids' development, the pressure is on to find activities that will keep your kids happy, playing, and growing the way they should. Making up a preschooler schedule can seem overwhelming - there are so many suggestions about how to keep a child busy, with each activity lasting for about three minutes - but by sticking to basics and establishing routine daily activities for children, you can really help to create a daily schedule that will leave both you and your child feeling fulfilled.



Creating a daily routine for your preschooler helps to make sure that they are progressing in the key areas of language, cognition, gross motor, and fine motor skills.

They seem like heavy concepts (and they are), but when you break them down, there are super fun and simple ways to help preschoolers learn the basic skills they need to be successful in school and beyond.

We think you'll find that by fitting each of these activities into your child's daily schedule, you'll be nurturing their growth, and having lots of fun at the same time.

So without further ado, here are the ten things that you should fit into your child's schedule every day.

I. Play Outside

It will come as no surprise that this is by far my favorite thing to do with little ones. There are so many simple ways to get outside, and so many fun things to do once you're out there.

Try to squeeze a walk into your schedule each day, and make an effort to make that walk take as long as possible. Look for bugs. Listen for birds, and point to planes. Talk about the foliage. The great outdoors is as great for language

development as it is for gross motor skills, so it's important to take time to get outside each and every day.

If you're having a tough day personally, feel free to take a mug full of coffee with you, put some earbuds in, and listen to music or a podcast of your own. Not anything too heavy that can't be interrupted – you still want to connect with your child. You and your child will both feel like you've gotten a reset, and you'll have checked off some development growth for your little one as well.

2. Read

It's never too early to start reading with your kids. It's okay to focus on letters and phonics if your child is interested (think alphabet puzzles and name practice), but it's also okay NOT to if your child isn't interested. Let your child guide their interest in academics at this stage, and instead focus on the joy and pleasure of reading.

Experts recommend that you spend as much time as possible reading to your young child, and to integrate at least one structured reading time each day. Choose a time, maybe right before nap or during an afternoon snack, and make reading a structured priority.

3. Dance

Crank up the tunes on Alexa or Pandora and shake your stuff with your kids. Dancing is an amazing way to learn rhythm while getting in some exercise and having fun. In fact, music and dance are integral not only in a child's physical development, but in their cognitive development as well.

Making music a part of your day helps to create a rich sensory environment for you child, and aids in the development of complex neural pathways. Music is a form of language, and teaching your kids to sing, dance, and keep time gives them an advantage in many areas in the future. So shake your sillies out with maracas and tambourines if that's your thing, or play more structured songs like Freeze Dance. Our kids may or may not prefer "Shut Up and Dance" and "Whatz Up, Whatz Up," but you do you.

4. Do Art Activities

You don't have to go full Pinterest to get this mission accomplished. Let your little ones color with crayons, decorate paper with stickers, and paint with watercolors.

Process based art (aka the lazy-mom kind, where you give your kiddo free reign over the materials) is actually far more beneficial for kids than those construction paper ladybugs you see floating around the internet. Try Monster Truck Painting for a great example of no-prep, process based art. It's fun and messy (two of a preschoolers favorite things) and full of color and sensory play. A little goes a long way when you're two, and simple is often best.

5. Practice Gross Motor Skills for Preschoolers

Most people know that children typically progress from crawling or scooting to walking, and then onto running and jumping. In addition to the basics - think running, galloping, and skipping - children need to learn balance and learn gentle risk taking.

Having a strong sense of balance upon entering school reduces the risk of injury in children, as well as providing academic benefits. Encourage your child to walk on a curb to practice their balance, or use step stones in the yard or throughout your neighborhood to practice jumping and landing safely.

If going outdoors isn't an option for you, you can still set up some awesome gross motor learning experiences without leaving the house. Buy a cheap balance beam from Ikea, or make one with some lumber from the home improvement store if that's your thing. Even a line of painter's tape on the floor will work.

Put out a small cardboard box and give your child some beanbags, balls, or stuffed animals to throw into it.

I love the [Magic Moves Wand](#) from Educational Insights that suggests gross motor skills that your child can safely perform indoors. Push back the couch, and sit back and relax while your kids fly like birds and jump like kangaroos around the living room. You get to be a little lazy, and the kids get to expend some of that whole-body energy. It's a winning combination!

6. Integrate Activities to Improve Fine Motor Skills

While your kids are exploring the big movements their bodies can make, they are also gaining more control over their fingers, hands, and coordination. Your preschooler will increasingly be able to perform small tasks with their hands. This can include things like holding a crayon, but it can even extend to games as simple as picking things up and putting them down.

Encourage your child to engage in play that involves a pincer grip (aka picking things up with their thumb and forefinger). Have them move pom poms between two containers, or just clean them up and dump them back out. Ask them to put Q-Tips through the holes in the lid of an empty spice jar. Lace beads onto a pipe cleaner. Drop cards into a hole cut into the lid of an empty oatmeal canister. Even those stickers during art time help a child to practice holding something small between their fingers.

7. Sensory Activities for Toddlers

Nearly everything can count as a sensory activity. You can make sensory bins with something as simple as crinkly paper from the dollar store, or create an oatmeal construction site. You can create slime, or let your kids play with playdough. Pick up our homemade playdough recipe on the hallway bulletin board!

And sensory doesn't always have to be messy! Grab a touch and feel book, or smell the different spices in your cabinet. Even activities like swinging, sliding, and balancing or bouncing on an exercise ball can give kids the sensory input they need to grow.

Preschoolers absolutely love sensory experiences, and making them a part of your child's daily schedule is a great way to fill time in a way that benefits everyone.

8. Help Around the House

This one is slightly controversial - although for the life of me I have NO IDEA WHY. Teaching my kids to use the dust-buster was the best idea I've ever had. They thought the noise was hilarious, and loved the "power" it wielded. Putting them in charge of the task while I straitened up other parts of the room was a complete no-brainer.

There are tons of other daily activities for children that can help take care of your to-do list while allowing them to practice real-life skills. They can chop veggies using kid-safe knives, or "wash dishes" alongside of their parents. They are experts at putting things away (as long as the "pick up, put down" phases lasts, anyways), and can help to feed their pets and throw things away. They can put napkins on the table at dinnertime, and sort silverware back into the drawer when it's clean.

We're not talking about making a list of chores for your preschooler, we're talking about practical, fun activities that help to make them a working part of the household.

In addition to allowing you to get some housework done, children learn important skills through performing age-appropriate chores for preschoolers. Kids who help around the house are more confident, have better life-skills, and a stronger sense of self-efficacy. (You know, in case you needed help in justifying why you're putting your kids to work.)

9. Play with Friends

Secretly, and we won't tell on you, how many parents actually like playing with their kids? I loved doing activities with them - pretty much all the things mentioned above! - but most adults are not fans playing pretend. Unless you're a preschool teacher, you probably do not like making weird voices or how the pretend scenarios constantly evolve. I know you enjoy your kids, I really do. But I get it if you just don't like playing pretend.

But kids? They LOVE it. In fact, kids NEED to engage in imaginative play. And we can't always fill that need for them. You're already doing this by having them attend preschool, but on the days they're not at school make a point of having kids over for playdates, or meeting up at the park.

You don't have to fill every need of your child's personally, but it is important that the needs are met. So find a work-around when you need to, and ensure that your kids are getting lots of play in each day.

Kids learn valuable skills from playing with other kids. They learn about taking turns and navigating conflicts. They learn to engage in the give-and-take aspect of play that is often missing in adult interactions. I mean, think about it - is grandma ever going to say, "No, we're DRAGONS, not kitties!" Odds are she'll give in and be a kitty, and the child will lose the chance to navigate that difference of opinion.

Getting your preschooler used to playing with other kids is not always easy - in fact, it could possibly be the hardest part of your day - but it is absolutely crucial to their development that they do so.

10. Play Alone

Oof. This can be a task. Not all kids are naturally inclined to entertain themselves, which means their moms and dads end up doing a reluctant song-and-

dance routine that involves engaging the child non-stop all day. I'm here to tell you that this approach? It's not doing anyone any favors.

Kids NEED to get bored, and it is from that boredom that their creativity comes. They'll never learn to use their imagination, create their own fun, or to simply be content with quiet if they are constantly being entertained.

The best way to teach children to entertain themselves is by starting with small increments of time, maybe ten minutes or so, turn off all electronics, and leave them in a place. You can even sit in the area with them, but pursue interests of your own (maybe read a book, or get some work done).

Set a timer, and try not to direct their play in any way until the alarm goes off. Stick with your routine and give your child independent playtime on their own at the same time every day, gradually increasing the length of time until you reach a comfortable level.