

How to Help Your Child Move from Reception to Year 1

A Guide for Parents

In Reception, children learn through play. The day is fairly unstructured and the children are given the option to choose their own activities, under the guidance of their teacher. They are encouraged to explore, both inside and outside, and are not asked to sit for adult-led teaching for longer than a few minutes at a time. When children move into year 1, their learning typically becomes more structured, and there are fewer opportunities for them to move around, choose their own activities or decide who they will spend their day with.

Many children can find this difficult. Schools do all they can to support transition, introducing more formal learning towards the end of the summer term in Reception and continuing to allow some play-based learning in year 1. However, the year 1 curriculum sets out clear requirements across all subjects, such as the learning of spellings and times tables. The children also need to begin preparing for the Year 1 Phonics Check and the KS1 SATs which happen at the end of year 2. Inevitably, this means they need to be taught individual subjects, and their learning will be more adult-led.

So what skills will your child need to master as they enter year 1, and how can you help them to do this?

Getting used to a new teacher, a new classroom and possibly some new classmates; what can you do?

- Talk about this change in a positive way, and keep talking about it over the summer holidays to keep it fresh in your child's mind. Six weeks is a long time when you're 5, and you don't want your child to forget what is going to be happening!
- Your child's school will have had some transition days at the end of the summer term to allow the children to spend time with their new teacher, so you can discuss these too.
- Keep in touch with your child's friends over the summer if you can – arrange some play dates.
- If the school holds an information evening for parents about their child's new class, attend this.
- Play down your own anxieties – children are very good at picking up their parents' worries. Emphasise the positives – instead of saying, 'You won't be allowed to play all day,' say, 'Won't it be exciting to have new books to choose from?' or 'It will be lovely to see all your friends again!' If you do feel your child is struggling as they begin year 1, arrange to meet with the teacher as soon as you can. Signs of this may include sleep problems, 'mystery ailments' on school days (tummy ache is very common!) or being reluctant to go to school.

Getting used to a new teacher, a new classroom and possibly some new classmates; what can you do?

- Plan some fun activities with your child that will help them to develop new skills. For example, they could write a letter or postcard to take into school describing what they have done over the holiday.
- Practise counting in 2s, 5s and 10s. 2p, 5p and 10p coins are great for this, or just count out loud, or count objects such as beads or bricks.
- Keep up the daily reading. Join your local library – many have summer 'reading challenges', which are fun for children to complete.

Help your child to learn to tell the time. Stick to 'o'clock' at this point, and possibly 'half past' if your child is coping well.

Sitting still and paying attention for longer periods; what can you do?

- Encourage your child to focus for longer periods on some of the activities described above. Start small – perhaps 5 minutes, and build up. Even in year 1, children should not really be expected to focus for longer than 15 minutes or so.
- Praise and reward your child for paying attention and completing activities.
- Do 'seated activities' as a family – a perfect example is sitting down together to eat a meal. Encourage your child to sit still, to focus on their food and at the same time to be part of a conversation with the rest of the family.

Learning to cope with less freedom; what can you do?

- Make home a relaxed place to be. Your child may have a small amount of homework, and will certainly be expected to read every day. Try to do this at a good time for your child.
- Then switch the focus off school and allow them to have that unstructured 'play' time that they used to have. Go for a walk, or swimming, or to the park, or just let them sit and play with their toys. Better still, play with them yourself. It's a great stress-reliever to play with building bricks after a tough day at work!
- Alternatively, let your child burn off their extra energy before expecting them to sit still. You will know which approach is best for your child.



Moving on and moving up is an inevitable part of school life, and your child will learn the skills they need in the end – skills such as confidence, adaptability and determination, which will stand them in good stead throughout life. As ever, if you have any concerns, you should speak to your child's teacher as soon as you can.