



# READY. SET. GO!

The year before your preschooler enters kindergarten it's normal to continually ask, "Is my child ready?" This baby that was completely dependent upon you just a few short years ago to feed, clothe, and bathe is getting ready to venture into a world where he or she will be responsible for doing these things independently. How do you know if your child is ready? How can you prepare your preschooler for this big step? This Milestone Experience includes a time for you to **ENGAGE** with your child through conversations about learning independence at home, with friends, and personal independence. You will also have an opportunity to **AFFIRM** your child by presenting him or her with a symbol, a school backpack or lunchbox filled with notes of encouragement from family or friends. We want your child to be able to take the love of family with him or her as they get Ready, Set, Go!

## STEP 1: PREPARE

We want to equip you to maximize this Milestone Experience with your child. First read through the full Milestone Experience Guide so you know what to expect. Then, set aside a special time outside of the home to **ENGAGE** in conversation with your child. Remember to have fun and take as much or little time as your son or daughter seems interested.

After your conversation, you will have the opportunity to **AFFIRM** your child either that same day or later that month by presenting him or her with a symbol, a gift he or she can use at school. This item could be a new backpack, lunchbox, sleep mat, etc. It would be great to have this item personalized and one that can be kept for many years to come.

There are several other ways to make this moment of affirmation even more special. Here are some options:

**OPTION ONE // VIDEO MESSAGES:** Have family and friends text a video message to your child. You can collect all the video messages on your phone and share them with your child when you present him or her with the school gift. The video message can include a kindergarten memory from that person or encouragement to your child as he or she gets ready to enter kindergarten.

You can send your friends and family an email/text saying, "To honor \_\_\_\_\_ as he/she gets ready for kindergarten will you take a minute to send him/her a video of you telling a story from your kindergarten year OR a video encouraging him/her as he/she gets ready for kindergarten?"

These videos will provide great encouragement as your child gets ready for this journey toward independence.

**OPTION TWO // LETTERS OF ENCOURAGEMENT:** Have family and friends write or e-mail a message to your child of a kindergarten memory or encouragement to your child as he or she gets ready to enter kindergarten. You can print of the e-mails and place them in the new backpack or lunchbox in a ziplock bag for your child to take the special love of his or her friends and family to school.

The conversation guide below gives you an opportunity to **ENGAGE** with your child as you talk about three different areas of independence. *It may even be a fun idea to find a kindergarten picture of yourself to bring along to show your child!* It would be ideal to have these conversations outside of the home so you and your preschooler feel like this is a special time between you. Perhaps take a trip to your favorite ice cream shop or take a picnic together. What matters most isn't the location but the quality time you will have engaging your child as you help your preschooler to get Ready, Set, Go!

## STEP 2: ENGAGE

Below is a full parent guide to help you talk about three areas of independence with your child including the discussion questions, insight for you for each section and some helpful ideas. Print out the discussion sheet for your **ENGAGE** time for this milestone and validate your child's answers by writing them down in the space provided.

### ITEMS NEEDED:

- A Bible (or you can use the scriptures printed on the sheet)
- A kindergarten picture of yourself (optional)
- A pen or marker

### INDEPENDENCE AT HOME

We all need to feel needed and know we're making a contribution. A great way for children to have this need met is through chores. Chores at home give a child a sense of worth and belonging. Each person in a family has a different role to play. Children at the age of four and five are perfectly capable of helping around the house. Empower your child to make a difference at home, to contribute to the family and feel needed in the process. Maybe you've already given your child some chores around the house, maybe not. This conversation will hopefully help you as you guide your preschooler in the area of independence at home.

### PARENTS READ AND SHARE THIS WITH YOUR CHILD:

"I am so proud of the way you are growing up and becoming such a big girl/boy. I want to talk to you about some ways you are becoming independent. You are now old enough to begin helping out around the house by doing some chores. Chores are a picture of us putting others needs above our own. We wash your clothes so you will have clean ones. We cook food so your body can get big and strong. Chores are a way to serve our family. When you look at Jesus you see the perfect picture of someone who came to serve."

(Read Philippians 2:3-4 from your Bible or use the scriptures below)

*Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.*

### ASK YOUR CHILD:

What are some ways you can begin helping out around the house now that you are getting bigger?

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*(Parent hint: Ideas include making his or her bed, setting the table, putting up clean clothes, cleaning up toys, bringing his or her plate and cup to the counter, etc. When your child feels independent at home it will carry over into other areas of his or her life. Home is the best and safest place to start. You can use a chart or a chore app on your phone to help your child keep track of daily chores. If you choose to pay your child for the chores you may want to purchase a Give, Save, Live bank or make your own jars to begin teaching the concept of giving first, saving second and living of the rest!)*

### *Reminders about setting your child up for successful independence at home with chores:*

- Choose developmentally appropriate chores. Don't ask your preschooler to put up the glass dishes in the top cabinet.
- Realize your child won't do it exactly like you do. It's OK if the bed has a few wrinkles in it!
- Be consistent. If you want your child to make his or her bed, make sure that's expected every day. If you expect it some days, and don't expect it others, it sends inconsistent messages to your child about what he or she needs to do.
- Show your child exactly what you want him or her to do. If you want your child to clean his or her room do it with your child a couple times talking him or her through each step. Your son or daughter may not think to clean of the top of the dresser. If that's important to you, make sure you show your child exactly what you mean by "clean your room."

## **INDEPENDENCE WITH FRIENDS**

Your child may not be ready for sleepovers with friends yet, but you've probably experienced playdates at this point. You've also probably noticed that your child is beginning to be more social and desires to be around other kids. God created us to be social beings, so set your child up for success with friendships by helping your son or daughter to be independent with them. Realize every child develops differently. Some children will do better socially than organizationally, therefore his or her independence with friendship will come more naturally than his or her personal independence.

### **PARENTS READ AND SHARE THIS WITH YOUR CHILD:**

"I can also tell you are getting bigger because you are learning to make your own friends. God has a lot to say about the friends we choose."

(Read Proverbs 13:20 from your Bible or use the scripture below)

*Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm.*

Tell your child, "God wants us to have friends who make wise choices so we can make wise choices too."

### **ASK YOUR CHILD:**

Can you name some of your friends? List them below:

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Does \_\_\_\_\_ make wise choices? How do you know?

### **PARENTS READ AND SHARE THIS WITH YOUR CHILD:**

"I also want you to BE a good friend. I want to read a few verses from the Bible with you to show you what Jesus says it means to be a good friend."

(Read John 15:12-13 from your Bible or use the scriptures below)

*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.*

Basically, Jesus says here that a good friend loves and is willing to lay down his life for another (putting the needs of another above our own).

**ASK YOUR CHILD:**

What can you do to be a good friend to others?

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**PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE**

Can he tie his shoes? Can she zip the jacket zipper? Can he open his juice box? Can she wipe well? Can he find his way to the classroom? These questions and more are the ones we ask when assessing whether or not our child is ready for kindergarten. The easy part is that we can actually practice them BEFORE our child goes to kindergarten. We can know whether or not our child can tie his or her shoes or wipe themselves well. Although it's hard to find verses in the Bible that say, "A child should know how to tie his shoes," or "Every child should be able to open her own juice box," there is something in the Bible about giving our best.

**PARENTS READ AND SHARE THIS WITH YOUR CHILD:**

"I have also noticed that you are getting bigger because you can take care of yourself in many ways and you are learning to do your best. God loves when we are hard workers and we do our best for him."

(Read Colossians 3:23 from your Bible or use the scripture below)

*Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.*

When you were small there were many things you used to not be able to do like put on your own shoes. You learned to do those things by practicing them over and over again. I want to help you by practicing some tasks that you may need to know for kindergarten like zipping the zipper of your jacket, etc.

What are some items you think we might need to practice before you get to kindergarten?

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Take this opportunity to listen to your child and the fears they might have about starting school. Maybe even take one of the items they list above and help your son or daughter practice right then!

*(Parent hint: Tink about the personal independence expectations your child will have when he or she enters kindergarten. Take some time to practice on the ones with which your child needs the most work. Doing this now will set your child up for success when it comes to personal independence in kindergarten.)*

**PRAY WITH YOUR CHILD:**

Thank God for your child and how he or she is getting older and learning to be independent at home, with friends, and also learn personal independence.

## STEP 3: AFFIRM

Now that you have **ENGAGED** your child in conversation about his or her independence at home, with friends, and personal independence, it's time to **AFFIRM** your preschooler with the special symbol you prepared. Perhaps you would like to select the week before the first day of kindergarten to **AFFIRM** your child.

Present your son or daughter with the school supply you purchased (the backpack or lunchbox, etc.) and show your child either the video text messages or emails and letters from family and friends.

Remind your child what he or she learned about independence as your child **ENGAGED** with you during this Milestone Experience.

This is a wonderful opportunity to show your child you believe in him or her and that you know your son or daughter is prepared to Ready, Set, Go!