



Information for parents and kindergarten teaching staff

Is my child ready for kindergarten? Medical criteria

This information leaflet is also available in Albanian, Arabic, Serbian, English, French, Italian, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Tigrinya and Turkish. See www.stadt-zuerich.ch/schularzt

Starting kindergarten is an important step in a child's life. Children develop in different ways and not at the same rate in all areas. Children who are 4 years old on 31 July can be enrolled at kindergarten. Here are some things to consider to ensure a successful start at kindergarten.

Confidence and curiosity: what to encourage and expect of your child

During their first year, children gradually become more confident about spending time away from their family and being curious about the outside world. Playgroups and nurseries are important places where they can learn and practice new skills. Starting kindergarten between the age of 4 and 5 is the next step in their development. The child is now ready to spend all morning every day in a larger group (about 18-25) with children of their own age and some slightly older ones led by the kindergarten teacher. The kindergarten provides the basis for further age-appropriate development steps. You can view the regional syllabus for kindergartens here: www.vsa.zh.ch.



Basic requirements for a good start at kindergarten

Between the ages of 4 and 5, most children acquire the physical, social, emotional and intellectual skills needed to be ready for the challenges of their new kindergarten environment

Whether they're doing free play, craft or learning in 'circle time', it's important for the child to be alert and fully able to participate. Knowledge of German is an advantage.

Many children need support when they start kindergarten. Experience shows that children who have **largely** met the following requirements are best able to accept and build on support. It is important that the child's **overall development, rather than individual factors** is considered when judging their readiness to start kindergarten.



1. Physical Requirements

- ▶ To be ready for kindergarten, the child must be awake and receptive in the morning so that they can actively participate in activities at kindergarten. This requires a sufficiently long and undisturbed night's sleep.
- ▶ They need to eat a suitable breakfast before kindergarten so that they have plenty of energy. They should no longer be bottle fed.
- ▶ They can walk to kindergarten alone or accompanied in the beginning.
- ▶ They are physically able to manage the entire morning.



- ▶ They can get out, eat and drink the snacks that they've brought from home.
- ▶ They know when they need the toilet and can go to the toilet independently with a little help (e.g. to unbutton their trousers).
- ▶ The child has basic skills and some dexterity in running, hopping, climbing stairs, painting, washing their hands, putting on and taking off their clothes and shoes.
- ▶ They can understand stories read to them and retell them in sentences of several words.
- ▶ They can understand and carry out simple tasks.
- ▶ They show concentration, i.e. several times a day, when asked by the kindergarten teacher, they can listen, watch or sit still for 5-10 minutes.
- ▶ When playing they show perseverance in their ability to play, watch and wait and try things.

2. Social and emotional requirements

- ▶ The child can be separated from their caregivers for the entire morning and is comfortable and happy in a group without them. They don't need a dummy.
- ▶ They try to clearly express their feelings and needs to others.
- ▶ They try to initiate contact with other children and teachers in an appropriate way.
- ▶ They understand the rules (of play) and try to apply them.
- ▶ They try to consider others' feelings and resolve conflicts without violence.
- ▶ If they haven't managed or achieved something, they have the confidence to try again.
- ▶ They can be comforted.

3. Intellectual requirements

- ▶ They are interested in exploring new and unfamiliar things and take pleasure in their successes.
- ▶ They observe and can take instruction when doing physical activities, making things or painting.

Starting kindergarten early

Irrespective of a child's level of development, the law now prohibits children starting kindergarten early.

Starting kindergarten late

Postponing the start of kindergarten requires careful thought. It is important to plan with specialists how the child can best be nurtured in the meantime. An application must be made to the District School Authority to request a postponement of the start of kindergarten. It is recommended to seek a medical opinion on the child's level of development.

Children's education Positively mastering challenges

It is challenging for children to spend the entire day, including eating and maybe a midday nap, without their parents, in a large mixed-age group of children. Depending on their prior experience and personality, the child can find it exciting or

overwhelming. Give your child time to gradually get used to the new childcare environment and plan for an extended settling-in time.

Paediatricians today believe that children both develop best and are best challenged and supported when their surroundings match their level of development.

Advice

Do not hesitate to contact the school medical service, the relevant regional school authorities or other specialists (e.g. your paediatrician, or a therapist/support worker involved with your child) if you have questions or want advice about the issues discussed.



Contact and other information

School Health Services
for the City of Zürich
School Medical Service
To find the address of the school's doctor, visit:
www.stadt-zuerich.ch/schularzt