



ABCs and 123s: What's Appropriate?

Many parents worry when their children aren't practicing letters and numbers through traditional worksheets and drills. They believe that pencil-and-paper exercises are the best way to prepare for elementary school. While preschools could emphasize workbooks, memorization, and testing, doing so would come at a cost—children would miss out on critical early learning experiences.

Children who are rushed into reading and writing before they are developmentally ready may struggle later because they lack the foundational skills needed for language use. While they may learn to recognize and sound out words, their comprehension may be weak. Without time to explore and play, they may not develop an understanding of words like "hard, harder, hardest" through real-world experiences. Activities like stringing beads, buttoning clothes, dressing up, cutting, pasting, pouring, and drawing are essential for developing fine motor skills needed for writing.

Similarly, math is much more than memorizing facts like $2 + 2 = 4$ —it requires logical thinking. Instead of early arithmetic drills, young children benefit from hands-on activities such as counting objects, sorting them into groups, adding and removing items, and playing games that introduce mathematical concepts. These experiences help children truly grasp ideas like addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication, rather than simply reciting answers without understanding.

Most importantly, pushing children into academic subjects too soon can dampen their enthusiasm for learning and hinder their confidence as learners. If children are constantly told what to memorize, they may become passive and dependent on instruction rather than engaged in discovery. In contrast, when given the freedom to explore and play, children develop curiosity, problem-solving skills, and a love for learning. They see themselves as inventors, discoverers, and thinkers—ready to take on the world with confidence.

A balanced approach that nurtures both academic and developmental growth ensures children are truly prepared—not just for school, but for lifelong learning.