

TOP 5 THINGS NOT TO SAY TO YOUR CHILD'S PRESCHOOL TEACHER

By Danielle R. Lindner



SHUTTERSTOCK/JOKE_PHATRAPONG

In my 14 years running a preschool, I've answered countless questions from students and parents alike. Here are five no preschool teacher wants to hear.

1 My daughter is 3, but she's a genius. Can we enroll her in the class with the 4-year-olds? While there are children who have exceptional academic skills, it's important for kids to stay with their age and peer group. Use that time to continue extra enrichment at home and build leadership skills in the classroom. Letting them be the head of the class is always better than pushing a child ahead where they must work hard to keep up.

2 If my son threw up at 4 a.m., can I still bring him to school today? We all know what it's like to have to get to work, but if every parent sends in a child who is sick, teachers and other students will get sick as well. A good rule of thumb: Keep your child home for at least a full day. When they are symptom free without medication, they are most likely okay to go back to school.

3 My daughter went the entire weekend with no accidents, so I'm going to send her to school in underwear today! When children start potty training at home, they will often be successful for many days at a time and then have accidents in school. This is totally normal. Children are not as focused on heading to the bathroom when they have the distractions of fun and friends. Potty training is a process that should not be forced or rushed. When children are sent to school in

underwear and have accidents, it can often cause embarrassment and setbacks. Don't worry, I don't know of too many kids who are still wearing pull-ups to the prom.

4 Would it be possible for you to cut up little Johnny's grapes and chicken at lunch? I don't have time in the morning. I don't know of one teacher who wouldn't cut up a child's food, if needed, or help them with anything that might be giving them trouble. But it's a lot to ask when a teacher has 15 other students to help during lunchtime. Try to prepare a lunch that's easy for your child to eat without the assistance of others.

There are many websites that offer great ideas for easy lunches for busy parents, and preparing lunch the night before will also help with the stress of the morning rush.

5 My child really needs to be challenged. What are you going to do to make sure they're at the head of the class? First and foremost, parents should remember that the preschool experience is a group experience. Children are attending preschool to become engaged academically and socially, but they are not there for individual tutoring sessions.

When you take a tour of a preschool, ask about the curriculum and whether they can do anything to help students who might struggle and challenge students who may be ahead. Remember that the teacher's job is to provide an exciting, engaging and nurturing experience for every child in their class.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHEN LOOKING FOR A GREAT PRESCHOOL

- * Does the school have a professional website that provides comprehensive information about their program, including their mission and teaching philosophy?
- * Is the school staff reachable via phone or email?
- * Does the school insist that you take a tour before enrolling your child?
- * Will the school allow you to bring your child on the tour with you, or allow a second visit or meet and greet before enrolling?
- * When you arrive at the school, are there security measures in place that only allow access to those who should have entry?
- * When you arrived for your tour, was the director or assistant director ready for you with a package of information that you could take home and read at your leisure?
- * Did your tour guide encourage questions and ask you what things are most important to you and your family when selecting a school?
- * Are the classrooms neat and organized?
- * Are cleaning supplies, including hand sanitizers, out of reach of children?



Parents should try to tour a preschool before enrolling.

- * Are the teachers actively engaged with their students? Are they sitting on the floor or down at their level when communicating with them?
- * Do you hear a teacher yelling at a student or using a harsh tone? If yes, move on to another school.

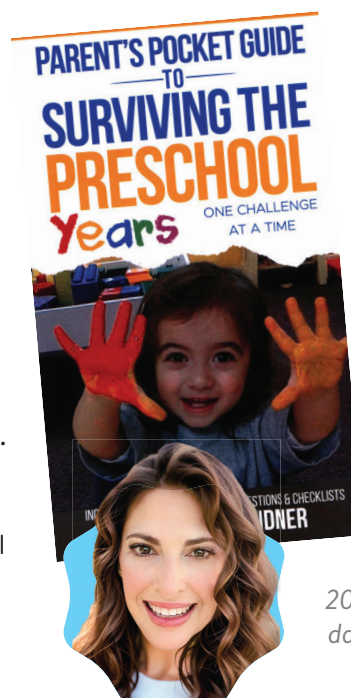
- * Is the noise level in the classrooms comfortable?
- * Does the school have a policy on nits and lice? If they say, “Don’t worry it never happens,” know that it does and will likely happen at least once during your preschool years.
- * How does the school handle any sickness or injuries that happen during the school day?
- * Do the teachers participate in professional development, and how much is required?
- * Are the children and staff happy and engaged?
- * What is the policy on parental visits or pop-ins?
- * Does the school have a curriculum that engages young learners and encourages divergent thinking, creativity and academic and emotional intelligence?
- * Does the school have a lockdown plan in place for emergencies, and what is it?
- * Do the classrooms have a variety of centers or areas for children to engage in creative play, science, literacy, art, music or math?
- * Is the school able and willing to provide you with current and past parent references?
- * Is the school a franchise or independent? If it is part of a franchise, who is ultimately in charge of running the program and overseeing the facility?
- * Is the program licensed by the state it is in, and has that license ever been suspended or revoked?
- * What is the school’s policy on inclement weather and holidays?
- * Does the school incorporate any foreign languages into their curriculum?
- * Do they accept students who are not currently potty trained and, if so, will they work with you to help your child be successful once you start the process at home?
- * Do they have an outdoor play area that looks engaging for all age groups?
- * Will your child be in a classroom with other children their age, or do they mix age groups?
- * How do teachers keep track of student development? Are there parent-teacher conferences?
- * Are teachers certified in first aid and CPR?
- * Does the school have an allergy policy?
- * What does the school do to ensure it is always cleaned and sanitized?
- * Do the teachers have a long tenure with the school, or do they have a lot of turnover?
- * Do teachers read to the children each day? Is the day organized in such a way that children can learn to anticipate what comes next?
- * How does the school communicate with parents about the events of each day and students’ progress?

PACKING FOR THE FIRST DAY OF PRESCHOOL

While every school’s checklist will vary, here are a few tried-and-true items that every preschooler should have in their backpack for the first day:

- * Buy a backpack, and not a rolling one!
- * Child-sized sleeping bag (Don’t send pillows or beloved stuffed animals. They will only get lost, dirty or both.)
- * Two complete (including socks) changes of clothing labeled with their name. These will most often be kept in a cubby marked with your child’s name. Make sure to update their clothing seasonally as the weather changes.
- * Extra sweatshirt or sweater to leave at school for their comfort, as needed.
- * If your child is still in diapers, send a full pack of diapers and/or pull-ups. If you send pull-ups, send the type that can open on the side to allow for ease and quick changes.
- * Suntan lotion. Most schools have a policy on the application of suntan lotion and will ask that it be applied prior to the school day. However, if your child is in school a full day and you live in a hot, sunny environment, it is best to pack it. Never send spray lotion, as it can cause health issues for little ones.

- * One package of wipes and tissues. Send this every month unless your school states otherwise. Wipes are used in classrooms for hands, faces, little bottoms and more, and are often pooled. Send full packages of tissues and wipes, not travel sizes.



- * A labeled fork or spoon in your child’s lunch each day. Please do not send knives.
- * A labeled water bottle or non-spill cup with a cover for water.
- * An old T-shirt to use as a smock to protect clothing during messy projects.

Danielle R. Lindner is an author and former preschool owner. Excerpted with permission from “Parent’s Pocket Guide to Surviving the Preschool Years: One Challenge at a Time” (Rethinking Inc., 2024). For more information, visit daniellelindner.com.