

Moving from Reception to Year 1

Tips for Parents and Carers

Most parents and carers understand the importance of preparing their children for starting school, but many are unaware that the move from reception to year 1 can be even more difficult. Some children move on without a backward glance, but others can struggle. Here are the reasons why, along with some ideas for things you can do to prepare your child for this next stage in their school life.

Why can transition to year 1 be tricky?

- Learning in reception is play-based. Children have lots of freedom to choose their own activities and can move on to something else when they choose. In year 1, learning becomes more formal, subject-based and adult-directed. Children can often struggle with this, especially if they have special needs or are young for their year group.
- Expectations increase in year 1. Children need to be able to follow instructions, focus for longer periods and become more independent.
- There are fewer opportunities to 'let off steam', or to have some quiet time.
- Homework expectations often increase.
- Children have to cope with all of this, along with lots of other changes, such as a new teacher, new classroom, possibly new classmates, maybe even a different playground.
- For parents, there are often fewer opportunities for day-to-day contact with teaching staff.

What will the school do to prepare my child?

- Schools understand how difficult this transition can be and will support children using a variety of methods.
- The reception teacher may introduce some more formal learning methods towards the end of the summer term so that children can get used to the new expectations.
- The year 1 teacher will probably begin the new school year by continuing to allow some play-based learning opportunities, particularly for those children identified as needing this.
- Most schools hold transition days in the summer term, where children get the opportunity to spend some time in their new classroom with their new teacher, getting to know the new systems and expectations.
- Lots of schools also hold open evenings or 'meet the teacher' opportunities so that parents can find out about the next stage in their child's school life.

What can parents and carers do?

- Talk positively about the move to year 1 and play down your own anxieties if you have them. For example, instead of saying things like, 'You'll have to work a lot harder in year 1', say, 'It will be exciting to learn about new things, won't it?'
- Talk about what is coming up in September. The summer holiday is a longer one, so it helps to keep the changes fresh in your child's mind. Talk about their new teacher and what they are looking forward to in year 1.
- Read, read, read. Reading with and to your child is the single most powerful thing you can do to support their learning and progress at school.
- Encourage your child to write, but make it fun and meaningful. For example, writing a shopping list for a meal they have chosen, writing a holiday diary or sending a postcard to Granny and Grandad. See the Ideas for [Encouraging Writing information sheet](#) for more activity ideas.
- Practise telling the time to the hour and half hour on a clock with hands.
- Practise counting in 2s, 5s and 10s, talk about 'more than' and 'less than' and look for 2D and 3D shapes in the world around you.
- Practise handwriting and letter formation. If your child has a weak grip or struggles to hold a pencil, strengthen their fingers using activities such as playdough, bead threading, construction with bricks and card lacing.

Once the new term starts:

- Continue to talk positively about school and focus on your child's good experiences.
- Build a good, communicative relationship with the new teacher.
- Plan in some relaxed time at home each evening so that your child still has opportunities for undirected 'play' time.
- Don't build in too many organised activities, such as after-school clubs, until you know your child is settled.
- If there is homework to be completed, make sure your child has chance to wind down and let off some steam first.
- Look for signs your child is struggling, such as trouble sleeping or reluctance to go to school. If you are concerned, speak to the teacher.

In this pack you'll find some games and activities that you can do with your child to help them prepare for year 1. Don't feel you have to work through them all; you know your child best, so pick the ones that suit their needs.