

Invitation to Independence

The year before your preschooler enters kindergarten it's hard to NOT continually ask, "Is my child ready?" This baby that was completely dependent upon us just a few short years ago to feed, clothe, bathe, etc. is getting ready to venture into a world where he/she will be responsible for doing these things independently. How do we know if they're ready? What do we need to do to make sure they're ready? This Rite of Passage Experience will help your family work toward knowing you've done all you can to prepare your child through an invitation to independence.

Kickstarter 1-Independence at home

Jim Fay who cofounded Love and Logic says we all need to feel needed and know we're making a contribution. The only way for children to have this same 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.

When it comes to children doing chores, even us as adults doing chores around the house, it's a picture of us putting others needs above our own. We wash our children's clothes so they'll have clean ones. We cook food so bodies are fueled to move and grow. 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 2:3-11 now.**

Our children at the age of 4 and 5 are perfectly capable of helping around the house. Maybe you've already given your child some chores around the house, maybe not. Here are a few things to remember when it comes to setting your child up for successful independence at home with chores:

1. Choose developmentally appropriate chores. Don't ask your preschooler to put up the glass dishes in the top cabinet. Children can make beds, set tables, put up clean clothes, etc.
2. Realize they won't do it exactly like you do. It's OK if the bed has a few wrinkles in it!
3. Be consistent. If you want your child to make his/her bed, make sure that's expected every day. If you do it some days, and expect it others, it sends inconsistent messages to your child about what he/she needs to do.
4. Show your child exactly what you want them to do. If you want them to clean their room do it with them a couple times talking them through each step. Your son/daughter may not think to clean off 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."



Start somewhere with helping your child have independence at home. When he/she feels independent at home it will carry over into other areas of his/her life. This is the best and safest place to start. Empower your child to make a difference at home, to contribute to the family and feel needed in the process.

Kickstarter 2-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 let's set our children up for success with friendships by helping them be independent with them. Throughout your child's life you'll have to help him/her navigate the friendship issue. One of the ongoing conversations will have to do with WHO your child chooses as friends. **Proverbs 13:20** says, *"Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm."*

None of us wants our child to suffer harm, so choosing wise friends will set our child up for success in life. As you consistently talk with your child about choosing friends ask him/her, *"Does _____ make wise choices?"* Your child may not be able to decipher if a person is wise, but they'll know whether or not that person makes wise choices.

We also want our child to BE a good friend. How do we make sure we've done our part as a parent to help our child BE a good friend? John 15:12-17 gives us a glimpse from the words of Jesus on what it means to be a good friend. 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).

As a parent we can help our child have independence with his/her friendships by teaching him/her to be a good friend and how to choose good friends. We won't be teaching these things once. It's a lifelong process of reminding our children to choose friends well and choose to be a good friend. But we can begin now setting them up for success with their friendships by allowing some independence in their relationships with friends.

Kickstarter 3-Personal Independence

Can he tie his shoes? Can she zip the 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 we ask when assessing whether or not our child is ready for kindergarten. The easy part about all these is that we can actually practice them BEFORE our child goes to kindergarten. We can know whether or not our child can tie his/her shoes or

wipe themselves well.

These are the things that kindergarten teachers blame on us when our child shows up unable to do these things. Can't wipe-mom's fault, can't zip her coat-parents never taught her! 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 doing things to our best.

Colossians 3:23-24 says, *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*

Perseverance is one of the best character traits we can teach our children when it comes to independence. Yes, teaching them to tie their shoes takes a while, but it matters. It's something he/she needs to know how to do. We would all do well to teach our children that even in the mundane they're doing for the Lord.

Think about the personal independence expectations your child will have when he/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.