

Afraid of starting preschool

Some children settle in at preschool with no worries at all. Others take a while to warm up. Let your child take it slowly, but also be firm. It's important to help children overcome their fears.

The four-year-old who is outgoing takes to preschool like a duck to water and doesn't need any gentle introduction. It may be quite different with a sensitive three-year-old who still feels closely attached to his parents.

If a parent leaves him at preschool the first day, he might not make a fuss right away. After a while he might miss his parent. He might become frightened. The next day he might not want to leave home.

Introduce preschool gradually

Most preschools introduce children to their programs gradually. This is particularly helpful for the [shy or sensitive child](#). Parents can stay with their children for as long as they wish. For several days a parent might stay nearby while their child plays and then take her home again after a time. Each day the parent can stay for a longer period. Meanwhile, your child is building up attachments to the teacher and other children. These will give her a sense of security when her parent no longer stays.

Sometimes a child seems quite happy for several days, even after his parent has left him. Then he gets hurt and suddenly wants his mummy or daddy. In that case, the teacher can help the parents decide if one of them should come back for a number of days.



If you are staying around the preschool, it's best to remain in the background. The idea is to let your child develop her own desire to enter the group, so that she forgets her need for you.

Think about your own feelings

Sometimes your anxiety is greater than your child's. If you say goodbye three times over, with a worried expression, your child might think, 'It looks as if something awful might happen if I stay here alone'.

It's natural for a tenderhearted parent to worry about leaving a small child for the first time. Let the preschool teacher, who often has a lot of experience, advise you.

Be firm

did you know ?

Many children cry until mum or dad is out of sight. Then they settle down and get right into playing.

A child who starts with some genuine anxiety about separating from the parent can learn that protesting allows him to avoid the situation.

She might then progressively use this to avoid preschool. When a child becomes reluctant or fearful about returning to a preschool with understanding teachers, it is usually better for the parents to act quite confident and firm and explain that the teacher will look after her and that she will be fine.

It can sometimes help to have someone different take a reluctant child to preschool. In any case, the child should not be deceived. He should be told that he has become friends with the teacher and the other children. Tomorrow his parent will not be staying at preschool. The parent should say goodbye once, cheerfully, then leave.



In the long run, it's better for children to outgrow their dependence than to give in to it. If a child's terror is extreme, the situation should be discussed with a child mental health professional.



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