



Going to Nursery School



The modern trend is to enrol your toddler at a nursery school from three or four years of age. She may have attended a playschool from an earlier age, or may have been happy and content at home with you until now. While most playschools focus mostly on socializing and playing (for younger toddlers), nursery schools differ in that learning takes place in a more formal and structured way. Many nursery schools have separate classes or sections for different age groups, so try to find one that will allow for your child's progress without having to move her unnecessarily.

Trust your instinct when looking for a school, and decide whether the school will suit you and your toddler's needs with regards to accessibility, safety and hygiene and quality of teaching and care. Your toddler will still spend the better part of her time at nursery school playing, but now her play has themes and structure that are the perfect platform for emotional and social development.

Your child will 'graduate to' pre-school when she turns five or six years old. Most nursery schools have a pre-school (Grade R) class, so there may be no need to move your child before starting "big school".

If your toddler has never been to playschool, starting nursery school may be the first time that she will be separating from you, so expect her to feel anxious and apprehensive.

Try these few tips to ease the transition for both of you!

- Trust your instinct – if you don't get a good 'feel' – don't enrol your child if you have other options.
- Visit the school beforehand – take your toddler there a few times beforehand to familiarise her with the new surroundings
- If possible, find a playmate who attends the same school beforehand – it always helps to see a familiar face.
- Teach your toddler some independence beforehand – let her get used to being separated from you for a few hours each day before D day.
- Let her walk, don't carry her in – the wrench at crunch time will be difficult for both of you to handle.
- Distract her as you are arriving and walking in – say, "Wow! Look at that nice swing! Let's go and try it out."
- Don't linger – be firm and encouraging. Tell her that she is safe and loved, then leave.
- Try not to be late in picking her up – it is not fair if all the other kids have gone home and your little one is wondering where you are.
- Be confident and positive – if you are, so will your toddler.
- Trust the teacher – once you are happy with your decision about your toddler's school and her teacher, allow the teachers to take control whilst your child is in their care.

If your child is still anxious, clingy and cries inconsolably when you leave her at nursery school and after two to three weeks is showing no signs of improvement, consider keeping her at home for a while and trying again later. In some cases, a change of school may be necessary. If the problem persists, consider a psychological assessment.

You may be feeling pressurised to enrol your child in every extra-mural activity on offer. Stimulation in the form of gym, swimming, music, karate, ballet or modern dancing can be most beneficial for your child, but beware of over-scheduling your child. Choose her extra mural activities with care, bearing in mind your child's temperament and personality, as well as being aware of the hazards of over-stimulation.

Your toddler's journey is drawing to a close at this age, and it won't be long before the age of pre-school (then big school) is dawning. I leave you with the challenge to find the balance between nurturing, protecting and guiding your child, and allowing her to explore, experiment and become an independent and unique person.

*Give her the wings to fly
The heart to love deeply
And the spirit to embrace all the beauty in life.*

Anonymous

Ann Richardson RN, RM
Private Nurse Practitioner
Dedicated to managing your well baby
Author and Parent Coach

Lonehill
Johannesburg

011 705-2711
info@toddlersense.co.za
www.toddlersense.co.za