

# LET'S GET READY: SURVIVING THE FIRST MONTH

The first day of school is right around the corner. You will be welcoming in brand new students. Try to think how you feel when you enter a new environment. Children do not know where is the bathroom, what if I get hungry, lost, hurt, where is Mommy going to be? A teacher's job is to reassure the child and parents they are entering a safe secure place where all their needs will be met and more they will have fun, make friends, and learn.

Building a relationship with your parents is your first step. A home visit is the best way to introduce yourself and reassure parents that their child will be taken care of. If you cannot make a home visit a phone call is also a good tool to use. When you call introduce yourself by telling your parents a little about yourself, the experience you have teaching preschoolers, and what their child needs to bring to school with them. A good tool to use is an information sheet you can fill out while talking to the parent. Some of the questions on the sheet could be child's name, birthday, any allergies, rest time needs, potty needs, siblings, pets, etc. This will help you know a little about your new student. A classroom visit is another good way to introduce the child to your room you can have half your children come for the first hour and then the next hour the rest of your children can come. This allows the children to learn where the bathroom is meeting some new friends and help them with first day anxiety.

## Getting to know me book

In order to help children learn about each other one of the first things to do is to make a book about themselves. You could send this home for the parents to do. You could do this in class by writing down the child's answers to questions: name, age, favorite food, color, toy, any pets, what do you like to play, etc. I like to send it home because then you will get pictures of your student's favorite activity. You could also send a bag home and have children bring back favorite things and pictures to share with their friends. You could ask children to make a poster about them to bring back and share with their friends. Depending on how many children you have at group time allow one or two children to talk about what they have brought to school this will help build relationships within your group of children.

Don't forget to make a book about yourself to share with your children.

Name tags and cubby tags

In order to make it easy for your children to read their names please make these as simple as possible, {Mike} use upper case and lower case to model how they will be learning to write and read their name. I also find it helpful to put the child's birthday and any allergies they may have. For example:

Mike  
3-24  
ALLERGY: PEANUTS

You may want to use the child's picture or a sticker on the tags until your children have learned their names. I like to place their names in alphabetical order also.

### Schedule

Your schedule is very important and it will be unique to your school and class. Remember you may have to change it several times in the first month as you get to know your group of children. Remember to schedule bathroom time, rest time, snack time, and outside time. A picture schedule is the best way for preschoolers to understand what happens next. Children will feel more secure if they know what is going to happen next. They will know after center time we clean up, then potty, wash hands, have snack, play outside, go to music, group time, get ready for lunch or go home. If you are consistent with the schedule it will help your day go smoother. Please remember depending on the child some will know the schedule the first week others it may take a month to get used to it.

### Transition Times

There will always be times when we will have a few minutes to fill with preschoolers whether it is waiting outside of music, the playground, or waiting for one child to use the potty. Down time is easy for the children to take over. A teacher should have a few tricks up her sleeves depending on children's ages; for example, sing the days of the week song, number songs, alphabet songs, five little monkeys, name songs, play touch your head, touch your toes, what color are you wearing today, etc.

### Rules

My rule is to have as few rules as possible a good guideline is;

1. You may not hurt yourself.
2. You may not hurt others.
3. You may not hurt the equipment.

Let your children help you write a rule book.

Sit down as a group; ask the children if we are going to run, should we run inside or outside? When they say outside, write down the rule that says we walk inside the room/building.

When someone has built a block tower who gets to knock it down? When they say the person who built it write this down. You may want the children to illustrate their rule book or just use the words. When a child runs in the classroom pull out your rule book and say remember what we wrote? Where do we run?

When children have ownership of the rules they are more likely to cooperate with them. Inappropriate words are always a problem in preschool. Find a children's dictionary and put a cover on it that says: Miss Debbie's Class - *Appropriate Word Book*, when a child uses a word they shouldn't; say "I don't think that word is in our book." Get the book down and allow the child to help you look up the word; when you cannot find it you say, "Sorry this word is not appropriate for our class." If a child consistently uses "Potty Words" after several warnings I start making them go to the bathroom and try because the only reason you use those words is when you need to "go." This helps a lot; boys hate to have to stop playing and "go potty," it usually cut down on children being called 'poo-poo head.'

Snack time

This is a good time to introduce a job chart. Children can help place napkins and cups on the table. If a child supplies snacks, then they could be the helper that day.

Job charts

This is another good time to use pictures with words to make a helping chart. You can use clothespins with children's names on them to assign jobs for the day. Here are some jobs you may want to use: Line leader, caboose, lights, snack helper, calendar, flag holder, etc.

Clean up

It is always good to give a five minute warning; walk around to all the groups and quietly say "In five minutes we will be cleaning up so finish what you are doing." When five minutes are up start singing a cleanup song, this will serve as a clue to encourage the children to start helping pick up. You may have to give a child a specific task. The easiest is to have the children in the block center clean that center, etc. It is very important to have each child help. This helps them feel a part of the group and have a

sense of satisfaction in completing a task.

### Rest time

Just like home there should be a ritual to this task. I like to introduce rest time music. I start it playing as most children are finishing lunch. This will be a music clue to what times it is. Each child should try to potty or have their diaper changed. I would make sure they wash their hands and face (please do not send children home with food on their face and shoes untied). Allow them to get whatever they need to rest and lay down. Turn off the lights when most children have finished pottying; this will be another non-verbal clue about what is going to happen.

If you have a child who insists he/she will not rest say, "It's in your rule book." Get the minimum standards booklet and open it to the rule and read it to them. I have used this many times and it has worked but I will not guarantee it will work on everyone. You also may want to use your director as the authority figure; say "Mrs. Smith says we have to rest at this time." Remember some children do not need as much rest as others so after whatever time interval you feel is right for your children, allow the ones who do not sleep (30 minutes is a reasonable time) let these children read a book, work a puzzle, or some other quiet activity on their mat.

It is also helpful to have a map for a sub to rely upon; that way the sub will know where each child rests. Another idea is to have a list of helpful hints for certain children; for example some may need a back rub or their special pillow. Remember; be kind to your subs and children by having all this information written down.

### Records

If you need to keep your children's work you can make file for each child using poster board fold it in half and tape or staple each side. This will make a holder that easel art should fit in. You can use legal size folders, accordion files, brown paper bag file (I will have an example at the conference) or notebook. Use whatever works best for you.

In order to track progress, have children draw themselves and write their name each month this will help you and their parents see their progress through the year. Having a notebook or folder for each child so that you can jot down observations, achievements, as well as what a child needs to work on will be helpful. A teacher should keep examples of each child's work throughout the year to share with parents.

### Setting up classroom

When you set up your room try not to make runways and place tall furniture against the wall so you can see all your room. Place messy centers by water, loud centers (block/dramatic play) close together, quiet centers (listening/books) close together. You may need to change your room depending on the activities your children prefer.

### Resources

[mrsdiminnie.com](http://mrsdiminnie.com)

Dr. Jean

*Classroom routines that really work for pre k and kind*

Kathleen Hayes and Renee Craenge  
strategies)

(scholastic teaching

*Debbie Freeman*

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