

Family's Guide to Transitional Kindergarten



What is Transitional Kindergarten?

Transitional Kindergarten (TK) is a free PreKindergarten program where children learn together through play and develop their social skills. All four-year-old children are eligible for TK the year before entering Kindergarten. TK is free of charge as part of California's public school system.

Why Go to TK?

TK provides a strong foundation for early learning, helping children develop essential social, emotional, and academic skills to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

Who can go to TK?

Starting in the 2025-26 school year, all children who turn four by September 1 are eligible for TK.

How do I know if my child is ready for TK?

If your child is four years old by September 1, they are ready for TK.

Schools have been working hard to make sure they are ready to meet the needs of all four-year-old children in TK. There are no other requirements for your child to attend TK in your district.

Who are TK teachers?

TK programs have a teacher and a second adult. TK teachers are trained and qualified to work with young children and to create a safe and supportive learning environment.

What is a typical TK day?

TK programs may be available for a half-day or full-day, depending on the school district. The start and stop times for TK can vary; so be sure to check with your school district for the schedule in your area. Most TK programs will include activities like:



Children enjoy singing, dancing, and moving. These activities help them learn how to stay focused and feel more independent.



Teachers read stories aloud, and children are encouraged to talk about the story, act it out, or connect it to other things they're learning. This helps build their imagination, listening skills, and love of reading.



In small groups, children receive support for their growing math and literacy skills. Teachers might use hands-on activities to make learning numbers, sounds, and letters fun.



Children have the chance to make art, build with blocks, explore nature and sensory tables (like sand and water play). These centers let children follow their interests, make choices, and learn through hands-on play.



Teachers introduce new ideas and encourage children to share their thinking with the group. This helps children feel part of a community, build friendships, and learn to work together.

What if my child needs special support?

TK programs are designed to support the diverse learning needs of all children, including those with special needs or developmental delays who may require additional support. Be sure to talk to your child's teacher or contact your school district to discuss the specific support your child may need.

How can I prepare my child for TK?

Starting TK is an exciting time, but it can also be stressful. Here are some things you can do to help your child feel ready and confident:

- **Practice self-care skills:** Have your child practice washing their hands, opening their lunch, and putting on/taking off coats and shoes.
- **Support toileting independence:** If your child is not fully independent in using the toilet, continue helping them at home and **reach out to the school to learn how they'll support toileting in TK.**
- **Build social skills:** Practice taking turns, waiting, sharing toys, listening to instructions, asking for what they need or want, and expressing feelings in positive ways.
- **Establish routines:** Set a regular schedule for waking up, getting dressed, eating meals, playtime, and bedtime. If your child naps during the day, consider transitioning to no nap or a later nap.
- **Visit the school:** If possible, take your child to see their new TK classroom and meet the teacher. Some schools will have an orientation or "sneak peek" days for this purpose. Check your school's or district's calendar to find out when these are happening.
- **Read books about starting school:** There are many wonderful books about starting school. Reading them together can help your child get excited and ease any worries they may have.

How do I decide if TK is right for my family?

Since TK may not cover all the hours some families need child care, it's important to think about what works best for your family. Many families choose to have their child attend a before- or after-school program in addition to TK. Free before- and after-school programs may be available for families who qualify. Be sure to ask your school about the options available in your area.

How do I sign my child up for TK?

Your local school district can tell you which elementary schools in your neighborhood offer TK programs, as some elementary schools do not have a TK program.

To enroll your child, you will need to provide, at minimum, the following required documentation to your local school district:

1. Your child's birth certificate
2. Your child's immunization records
3. Two proofs of your residence
 - a) A utility bill sent to your home
 - b) A rental agreement or mortgage



Learn more at cauniversalprek.org