

# School readiness: When to start school?

Everyone wants children to do well and thrive at school. Starting formal schooling can set a path for the rest of a child's life. But when a child has experienced developmental trauma, when is the best time to start their school journey?

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## Early education

Early childhood education settings can have a positive effect on a child's future – but not all settings are the same.

Education settings that focus on play rather than formal teaching have shown to help a child's intellectual, social and emotional development. They have also shown to help reduce high school drop-out rates and juvenile arrests.

However, when it comes to formal schooling environments, starting school early presents a different picture.

In countries like Australia, research shows the later a child starts school, the better they do academically. Children who start school younger tend to have more challenges with language and behaviour, and have lower academic progress.

For children who have experienced developmental trauma, it is not just their age that impacts their learning experience, but their trauma itself.

## When to start school?

Children who have experienced developmental trauma have a more difficult school journey than their peers.

The brains of children who have experienced developmental trauma focus on keeping them safe, not on learning. As they recover and start to feel safe within their environment, they can better access the parts of their brain needed for academic learning. They can also better manage the social and emotional interactions with their peers.

Feeling safe can take time so, while all children are different, sometimes the best option for their long-term success is to wait to start school.

## Tips for early learning

Helping a child learn through play can start very early. You can:

- ✓ Visit parks, playgrounds and libraries.
- ✓ Join parent groups and playgroups.
- ✓ Attend early education settings like childcare centres, playschools and preschools.

Once a child has started school, stay involved and connected with them, and show interest in what they are learning. You can also work with their school to develop Individual Learning Plans if needed. All these things will help ensure the child has the best road to success.



LEARN MORE



**Here to help!** Come and talk to the Therapeutic Assessment and Planning Team if you would like to discuss practical ways you can be trauma informed. Contact your case manager or email [Therapeutic-assessment-OoHC@act.gov.au](mailto:Therapeutic-assessment-OoHC@act.gov.au)

Sources:

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