



Early childhood services: Preschool

Key Messages

- All states and territories have preschool services, although they are called many different names.
- Preschool is excellent for child learning and development
- Preschools are generally for children who turn 4 in the year before starting school, although some preschools are for 3-year-olds
- Preschool programs are offered in a variety of settings

What is preschool?

Preschool programs are educational services for children before they go to school. Mostly they are for four-year-olds but sometimes there are preschool programs for three-year-old children also. Preschool is provided by a qualified preschool teacher. Preschool services are called different things by the States and territories including kindergarten and early learning centres.

Preschool programmes are run by different organisations in different States and territories. Depending on where you live, preschool services may be available in children's centres, long day care centres, community preschools, government schools and independent schools. The fees for your child to attend a preschool service will vary.

Preschool programs give children the opportunity to learn through structured and unstructured play. Activities in preschool programs include craft, games, puzzles, stories, singing, and indoor and outdoor play.

What are the benefits of preschool?

Preschool is strongly recommended for all children. It is estimated that around 90% of brain development occurs before children go to school (1). Preschool can stimulate child development during this period of rapid brain growth with lifelong effects. The benefits of attending preschool include:

- Learning to love learning
- Improving physical development
- Making friends
- Building confidence
- Developing communication skills
- Enhancing self-regulation
- Easing the transition to school
- May reduce the need for specialist services
- Provides opportunities to participate in a wide range of activities



- Encourages positive behaviour
- Is good for overall health and wellbeing

How to choose a preschool

All preschool programs will encourage you to come along for a visit. You will get a good sense from the atmosphere and talking to the preschool staff about whether you think the preschool will be a good fit for your child. Some of the things you might want to ask include:

- What activities do they have for the children?
- How long are the sessions and how many does my child attend each week?
- Does the preschool offer extended hours if I need them?
- How much are the fees?

Preschool should be a safe and comfortable place and the children should have a choice of fun and challenging activities. You should see that the teacher and other educators work confidently with the children and enjoy their company.

Including children with a disability or developmental delay

All children have the right to attend preschool regardless of disability or developmental delay. Funding and supports available to help the preschool include children with a disability or developmental delay vary across the states and territories of Australia.

Talk with staff about your child's development and any learning or other concerns you have. Ask what extra supports the preschool program can put in place to meet your child's needs. Ask the preschool teacher if your child needs an inclusion plan. An inclusion plan can help a preschool get ready to provide any additional support your child may need.

Think about what is important to your child feeling safe and comfortable and talk to staff about how what might be helpful.

Children with disabilities who attend preschool have great opportunities to grow socially and emotionally, which helps them get ready to start school.

Once your child starts preschool

There are important things you can do to stay connected with your child when they go to preschool, including:

- Finding out as much as you can about the preschool program and routines.
- In some programs you can get involved by volunteering as a helper.
- There are preschool activities you can do with your child at home, so ask the staff.



- Connect with other parents and carers.

How do I start?

The first step is to find out what preschool services are available in your state or territory.

Preschool services around Australia

In **Australian Capital Territory** preschools are known as preschools or early learning centres

For more information, visit [ACT Department of Education – Enrolling in preschool](#)

In **New South Wales** preschool services are known as preschools

For more information, visit [NSW Department of Education – Starting preschool](#)

In **Northern Territory** preschool services are known as preschools

For more information, visit [NT Government – About child care services](#)

In **Queensland** preschool services are known as kindergartens

For more information, visit [Queensland Government – About approved kindergarten programs](#)

In **South Australia** preschool services are known as preschools, kindergartens, early learning centres or centres for early childhood development and parenting

For more information, visit [SA Government – Preschool and kindergarten services](#)

In **Victoria** preschool services are known as preschools, kindergartens or preschool programs in long day care centres

For more information on preschools in Victoria, visit [Victorian Department of Education and Training – Child care and kindergarten](#).

For more information on Kindergarten for three year olds visit [Victorian Department of Education and Training – Three-year-old kindergarten](#)

In **Tasmania** preschool services are known as kindergartens

For more information, visit [Tasmanian Department of Education – Kindergarten](#)

Western Australia: preschool services are known as kindergartens

Additional information

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/play-learning/preschool/preschool-in-your-state>



Reference

- (1) <https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/early-childhood-matters/brain-development/#:~:text=90%25%20of%20Brain%20Growth%20Happens,full%20grown%20%E2%80%93%20by%20age%205>.