

Starting Kindergarten

A quick guide for parents/guardians



Enrolling your child in kindergarten is an exciting milestone! This guide has helpful information to help you get started.

Why Kindergarten Matters

Kindergarten helps kids learn, grow, and make friends in a supportive environment. It's a free learning opportunity with caring teachers. Families may also get help with meals, transportation, and special education services

All About Kindergarten

History of Kindergarten in Oregon

- ▶ In 1981, Oregon required all school districts to offer kindergarten by 1991.
- ▶ In 2015, the state began funding full-day kindergarten.

Is Kindergarten Required in Oregon?

No, kindergarten is not required in Oregon. However, most families choose to enroll their child at age 5. School attendance becomes mandatory at age 6. If a child turns 6 before September 1, they may be placed in first grade, even if they did not attend kindergarten.



Full-Day vs. Half-Day Kindergarten

- ▶ All school districts must offer half-day kindergarten.
- ▶ [Under Oregon Revised Statute \(ORS\) 336.095](#), many districts also offer full-day kindergarten at no cost to families.

Every Child Has the Right to Attend School

All children in Oregon can attend public school, no matter their perceived race, background, immigration status or the status of their parent(s) or guardian(s). To read more about the rights of children click [here](#).

Enrollment and Registration

What Should My Child Know Before Starting?

Kindergarten in Oregon is based on age, not skills. Schools welcome all children, no matter what their abilities. Families and schools work together to support this big milestone.

Is public kindergarten free?

Yes! Kindergarten is free for all families. Schools may ask for supplies like pencils and notebooks, but assistance is available if needed.

When does kindergarten registration begin?

Most schools begin kindergarten enrollment in the spring before the school year starts. Check with your local school district for exact dates.



• • • • •
*Not sure which district you
belong to?
Visit the [Great! Schools](#)
webpage for assistance.*

Can My Child Start Kindergarten Early?

Under [Oregon Revised Statute \(ORS\) 336.095](#), each school district sets its own rules for early enrollment. If a district allows early entry, families may need to complete a process that includes meetings and assessments. Contact your local school district to learn about their early entry policy.

Should I Wait to Enroll My Child?

Starting kindergarten on time helps kids succeed. If you delay, your child may have to start in first grade the next year. Check with your local school district for options.

How do I register my child for kindergarten if we are new to Oregon?

Contact your local school district or neighborhood school. They will guide you through the enrollment process.

What documents are needed to register my child for kindergarten?

To register your child in Oregon, you'll typically need:

- ▶ Proof of age (birth certificate, passport, etc.)
- ▶ Immunization records
- ▶ Proof of address (utility bill, lease, or mortgage statement)

Some schools may ask for emergency contact info and additional forms. Your district will help you with any missing information.

What if my child's immunization records are from another country or incomplete?

Children must have at least one dose of required vaccines or an approved exemption to start school. Records from other countries are accepted. Some children may qualify for exemptions, including:

- ▶ Age-related vaccine requirements
- ▶ Medical or non-medical exemptions
- ▶ Immunity documentation
- ▶ Houselessness or refugee status



For more details, contact your child's school, or visit the [Oregon Health Authority immunization website](#).

What if my family doesn't have a permanent address?

Your child can still enroll in school under the [McKinney-Vento Act](#), which protects students experiencing housing instability. Contact your school district's McKinney-Vento liaison for support. Contact your school district's McKinney-Vento liaison for support. More information is available on the [Oregon Department of Education's McKinney-Vento Act webpage](#).

What If My Child Doesn't Speak English?

All languages are welcome! Schools cannot exclude children based on language. Kids learning English get extra support while staying in regular classrooms.

Does My Child Need to Be Potty-Trained?

No. Schools must enroll all age-eligible children, even if they're not fully potty-trained. Support is available if needed.

What are my rights as a parent or guardian of a school-aged child?

All children in Oregon have the right to a free public education, no matter their background or immigration status. Schools cannot ask for or share personal information without permission and must communicate with families in a language they understand.

Does my immigration status affect my child's ability to attend school?

No. All children living in Oregon can go to school, and schools cannot ask about immigration status.

What if my child has a food allergy and/or medical condition?

- ▶ Tell the school about the allergy or condition.
- ▶ Provide a doctor's note with medical details.
- ▶ Fill out required forms for medication or emergency care.
- ▶ Meet with staff to ensure your child gets the right support.

Your child may qualify for important protections and accommodations under a [504 Plan](#) or an [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#) if their condition affects their learning.

What if my child experiences a disability?

Children with disabilities can start kindergarten at the required age. They may receive extra support through an IEP to meet their learning needs.

What if my child previously received special education services?

- ▶ Support continues if your child has been receiving Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE).
- ▶ A transition meeting will be held before kindergarten to plan the right services.

This ensures your child gets the best possible start in kindergarten.

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Additional Resources

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●



As a parent and guardian, you play a key role in your child's learning.

To learn more about how to help your child grow and succeed you can download this helpful PDF from Parent Powered:

- ▶ [In English](#)
- ▶ [In Spanish](#)

Need Help with Enrollment?

If you have questions about class schedules, transportation, meals, or questions about enrollment contact your local school district, visit the [Oregon Department of Education website](#) or call 503-947-5600.