



Universal TK Readiness Checklist

Your Complete Guide to
Transitional Kindergarten Preparation

Developed for Parents, Caregivers &
Early Childhood Educators

Ages 4–5 • School Year Readiness • Evidence-Based Domains



Free
Resource



Printable



Family-
Friendly



Welcome, Families & Educators!

This Universal TK Readiness Checklist is designed to help you assess and support a child's preparation for Transitional Kindergarten (TK). It covers 7 essential developmental domains aligned with California's TK curriculum frameworks and national early childhood education standards.

Use this checklist at home, during parent-teacher conferences, or as part of a school readiness screening. Every child develops at their own pace — this tool is a guide, not a gatekeeping test.

How to Use This Checklist

Step 1



Print or use digitally.
Observe the child over several days — not just one sitting.

Step 2



Check each item the child can do consistently. Leave blank if not yet observed.

Step 3



Use the score summary to identify areas of strength and growth.

The 7 Readiness Domains at a Glance

Domain	What It Covers
1 Social-Emotional 	Self-regulation, feelings, peer interaction, transitions
2 Language & Communication 	Vocabulary, listening, following directions, expressing needs
3 Early Literacy 	Letter recognition, phonics awareness, print concepts, name writing
4 Early Math & Logic 	Counting, shapes, patterns, comparison, problem-solving
5 Physical Development 	Fine motor, gross motor, self-care, body coordination
6 Cognitive & Curiosity 	Attention span, memory, cause/effect, creative thinking
7 Family & Community 	Home language, cultural identity, routines, independence



Readiness Domains 1 & 2

Social-Emotional Development and Language & Communication

These first two domains focus on how children manage feelings, build relationships, follow directions, and communicate clearly in everyday situations.

1. Social-Emotional Development

Children who are socially and emotionally ready can manage feelings, build relationships, and navigate a classroom community.

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|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | Separates from caregiver without excessive distress |
| ☐ | Identifies and names basic emotions (happy, sad, angry, scared) |
| ☐ | Uses words instead of physical aggression when upset |
| ☐ | Takes turns and shares materials in play |
| ☐ | Follows classroom rules and group expectations |
| ☐ | Shows empathy or concern when others are hurt or sad |
| ☐ | Manages transitions between activities with minimal disruption |
| ☐ | Engages in cooperative play with 1–2 peers |
| ☐ | Asks for help from an adult when needed |
| ☐ | Persists on a task even when it's challenging |

2. Language & Communication

Strong language skills help children participate in discussions, follow instructions, and build early reading foundations.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | Speaks in complete sentences of 4–6 words |
| ☐ | Understands and follows 2–3 step directions |
| ☐ | Retells a simple story or event in sequence |
| ☐ | Uses vocabulary appropriate for age and experience |
| ☐ | Asks and answers “who,” “what,” and “where” questions |
| ☐ | Listens attentively during read-alouds (5–10 minutes) |
| ☐ | Engages in back-and-forth conversation |
| ☐ | Speaks clearly enough to be understood by strangers |
| ☐ | Describes pictures or objects using details |
| ☐ | Uses language to negotiate and problem-solve with peers |





Readiness Domains 3 & 4

Early Literacy Skills and Early Math & Logical Thinking

These next two domains focus on early reading, writing, number sense, shapes, patterns, and problem-solving skills that help children build a strong foundation for school learning.



3. Early Literacy Skills

Early literacy readiness sets the stage for reading and writing success in kindergarten and beyond.

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|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | Recognizes and names most uppercase letters |
| ☐ | Recognizes and names most lowercase letters |
| ☐ | Identifies the first letter of their own name |
| ☐ | Writes their first name (may not be perfect) |
| ☐ | Understands that print goes left to right, top to bottom |
| ☐ | Recognizes rhyming words (cat/hat, dog/log) |
| ☐ | Identifies the beginning sound in simple words
<i>e.g., "/b/" is the first sound in ball</i> |
| ☐ | Holds a book correctly and turns pages one at a time |
| ☐ | Pretends to read using pictures and memory |
| ☐ | Shows interest in books, stories, and being read to |



4. Early Math & Logical Thinking

Mathematical readiness includes number sense, spatial reasoning, and the ability to recognize patterns and relationships.

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|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | Counts out loud to at least 20 |
| ☐ | Counts objects 1-to-1 up to 10 (touches each item once) |
| ☐ | Recognizes written numerals 0-10 |
| ☐ | Understands concepts: more/less, bigger/smaller, first/last |
| ☐ | Identifies and names basic shapes (circle, square, triangle, rectangle) |
| ☐ | Creates and extends simple patterns (AB, ABB)
<i>e.g., red-blue-red-blue</i> |
| ☐ | Sorts objects by color, size, or shape |
| ☐ | Understands positional words (on, under, beside, between) |
| ☐ | Compares quantities (more, fewer, same) |
| ☐ | Solves simple real-life problems with objects
<i>e.g., "If I have 3 and give away 1, how many left?"</i> |





Score Summary & Next Steps



Review each readiness domain and note strengths, growth areas, and next steps.

Domain	Items Checked (out of 10)	Notes / Observations
1. Social-Emotional	/10	
2. Language & Communication	/10	
3. Early Literacy	/10	
4. Early Math & Logic	/10	
5. Physical & Self-Care	/10	
6. Cognitive & Curiosity	/10	
7. Family & Community	/10	
TOTAL	/70	



Score Interpretation Guide

Score Range	What It Means	Suggested Next Step
56–70 (80–100%)	Strong TK readiness across most domains	Enroll and celebrate — child is well-prepared!
42–55 (60–79%)	Good foundation with some growth areas	Focus support on 1–2 lower-scoring domains
28–41 (40–59%)	Developing readiness — continue skill-building	Consider additional preschool or TK prep activities
Below 28 (<40%)	Early intervention may be beneficial	Speak with pediatrician or early childhood specialist

Important Reminder



This checklist reflects skills that are commonly observed in TK-ready children, but development is not a race. Children from diverse linguistic backgrounds, with disabilities, or from under-resourced communities may demonstrate readiness in ways not captured here. TK is designed to meet children where they are — this tool is a starting point for conversation, not a final verdict.

