

# Guide to Starting School

Available as a FREE DOWNLOAD at  
[oxfordowl.co.uk/starting-school](http://oxfordowl.co.uk/starting-school)



OXFORD

# Introduction

Starting primary school is a major milestone for you and your child, and this guide has been written to help your child make the best possible start to school life. Here you'll find all of the important information and practical advice you'll need, supported by the free resources available on Oxford Owl: [www.oxfordowl.co.uk/starting-school](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/starting-school)

We hope the first few weeks of school go well for you and your child – good luck!

## Author biography

James Clements is an experienced teacher, education writer and school adviser. He is also the sleep-deprived parent of two children.

**Note:** We realise that there are many different people involved in the care of children, from foster carers to grandparents. We have used the term 'parents' in this guide as a shorthand for all these different carers.

# Preparing for School

## Thinking about school

Help your child learn what to expect in the classroom by:

- ★ **Talking about school** Especially all of the fun things that will happen at school.
- ★ **Practising the routine** It can be helpful to do a practice journey before the big day, looking for interesting things on the way.
- ★ **Reading books** Books are a great way of answering children's questions about school and explaining how the school day works. Take a look at the reading list on Oxford Owl: [www.oxfordowl.co.uk/starting-school](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/starting-school)

## Practical skills for school

There's a whole range of practical skills that will come in handy during a busy school day:

- ★ **Recognising their name** It's handy if your child can find their space in the cloakroom and their clothes and belongings.
- ★ **Going to the loo on their own** Being able to use the loo and wash their hands afterwards will help your child to feel independent and reduce the chances of an accident.
- ★ **Dressing** Being able to dress and undress independently will help your child when it comes to getting ready for PE.



## Oxford Owl recommends

Read With Biff, Chip and Kipper: *Let's Get Ready For School*  
Price: £12.99

Get ready for starting school with this fun activity kit from Oxford Reading Tree's much-loved Biff, Chip and Kipper. Includes *Starting School* storybook, write-in activity book with games cards, poster, stickers, certificate, and a handy parent guide. It's the perfect kit to prepare your child for starting school through engaging activities at home.



# First Day at School

## The night before

- ★ **Get everything ready** Double-check that all clothes and bags are labelled, lay out your child's uniform and have bags packed and ready for the morning. This will leave time for any last-minute talks or perhaps a special breakfast.
- ★ **Talk about the exciting day ahead** Remind your child about the fun things waiting for them at school.

## Going to school

- ★ **Leave plenty of time to get there** Rushing to get everyone ready in the morning is part of being a parent, but getting there nice and early on the first day will help make it a more enjoyable experience.
- ★ **Take a photo** Well, it's their first day at school.
- ★ **Say a (quick) goodbye** It's probably best to keep the goodbye as quick and free from drama as possible. If your child does become upset, try to remain calm. Stay for a short time and then slip away quietly.

## After school

- ★ **Be prepared for a very tired child!** Even if your child is used to a long day at nursery, a school day can be exhausting.
- ★ **Check their book bag** While lots of schools communicate by email, important letters and forms from school are still sent home regularly. You might also find wrappers, discarded fruit and glitter-covered works of art lurking at the bottom of their bag.
- ★ **Organise play-dates** Over the next few weeks try to arrange opportunities to meet up and play with a wide range of children from the class. This is particularly important if your child is a little shy or takes longer to settle.

## Resources on Oxford Owl

- Video guides to help you support reading at home
- Storytelling videos
- Activity sheets and games to develop early maths skills

[www.oxfordowl.co.uk/starting-school](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/starting-school)



## The Curriculum

When they first start school, children follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum\*. The things your child will learn in Reception have been organised into three prime areas of learning:

- ★ **Communication and Language**
- ★ **Physical Development**
- ★ **Personal Social and Emotional Development**

and four specific areas of learning:

- ★ **Literacy**
- ★ **Mathematics**
- ★ **Understanding the World**
- ★ **Expressive Arts and Design**

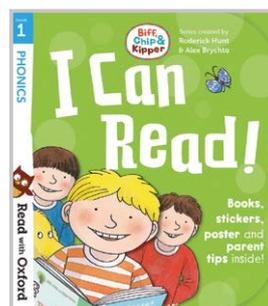
In the EYFS, play is a very important part of your child's development and most learning will be introduced through a mixture of carefully planned opportunities for play and some adult-led focused activities.

### Assessment

Throughout your child's time at school, they will be assessed regularly. This is to check their progress and identify the next steps in their learning. The school may carry out a baseline assessment when your child starts to find out what they can do already.

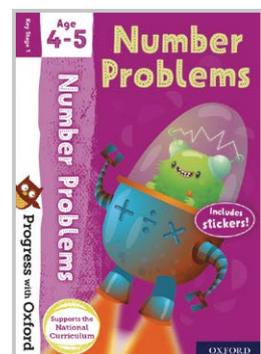
At the end of Reception, your child's teacher will assess again and it is likely they will complete an EYFS Profile. This assessment is carried out by the Reception teacher and is based on what they, and other staff caring for your child, have observed over a period of time. All of the information collected is then used to assess where your child is currently in the seven areas of learning. The school will give you a report of your child's progress, including information from their EYFS Profile.

### Develop key skills at home



Read with Oxford:  
**I Can Read!**  
Price: £12.99

Progress with  
Oxford: **Number  
Problems**  
Price: £3.99



\*Note: Each country within the UK has its own curriculum. In this guide, we've focused on the curriculum in England.

# Reading at School

Reading is one of the most important things your child will learn to do at school. In Reception there are two aspects to reading that your child will develop: phonics and comprehension.

## Phonics

In England, children are taught to read using phonics. Phonics is an approach to reading that focuses on building words from sounds. In Reception, children will start by learning the letters and the sounds they make, and how to put them together to read simple words. For example, once they know the individual sounds for 's', 'a' and 't' they can blend them together to form the word 'sat'.

## Comprehension

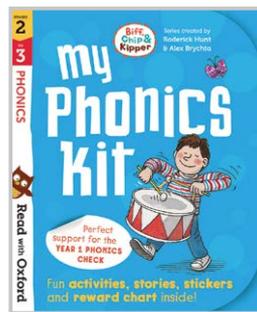
Good comprehension skills are vital as they help children understand the meaning of the words, as well as supporting their vocabulary and knowledge of the world. In Reception, most comprehension teaching will focus on children listening to books that are read to them and then talking about them.

## Books at school

The books your child reads at school and brings home to read with you will depend on whether the school uses a reading scheme or not. Reading schemes, like Oxford Reading Tree, are structured, levelled sets of books that grow gradually more challenging over time.

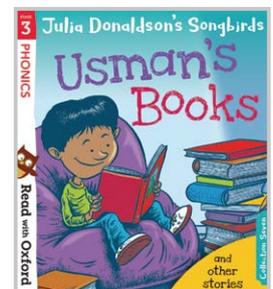
A common approach to reading in Reception is to send two books home each week – one from a reading scheme for your child to read to you and one chosen by the child for you to read aloud to them.

## Support phonics at home



Read with Biff, Chip and Kipper:  
My Phonics Kit  
Price: £12.99

Julia Donaldson's  
Songbirds:  
Usman's Books  
Price: £10.99



## Resources on Oxford Owl

- Phonics audio guide to help you learn the phonics sounds
  - Teaching methods explained
- [www.oxfordowl.co.uk/starting-school](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/starting-school)



# Maths at School

Maths is another key subject and it is central to your child's education. The EYFS Framework says that by the end of Reception, children should be able to:

- ★ Count reliably with numbers from one to 20, place them in order and say which number is one more or one less than a given number.
- ★ Use quantities and objects to add and subtract two single-digit numbers and count on or back to find the answer.
- ★ Solve problems, including doubling, halving and sharing.
- ★ Use everyday language to talk about size, weight, capacity, position, distance, time and money to compare quantities and objects and to solve problems.
- ★ Recognise, create and describe patterns.
- ★ Explore characteristics of everyday objects and shapes and use mathematical language to describe them.

(Source: Early years outcomes, Department of Education, September 2013)

## Maths in Reception

In Reception, often maths will be linked to real-life contexts. Children will use resources such as counters, beads and blocks to work out a calculation. For example:

**Teacher:** *How many counters do you have?*

**Child:** *Seven.*

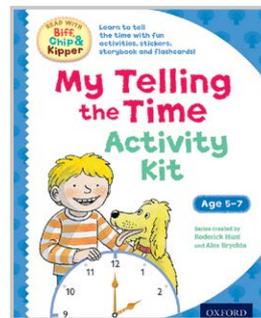
**Teacher:** *If you take away five counters, how many do you have left?*

Child physically takes five counters away

**Child:** *Two*

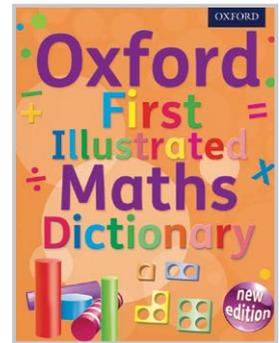
Working in this way helps children to build an understanding of an abstract mathematical idea, in this case subtraction, which wouldn't be possible if they only used numbers or tried to work out the problem in their head.

## Develop early maths skills at home



Read With Biff, Chip & Kipper: My Telling the Time Activity Kit  
Price: £12.99

Oxford First Illustrated Maths Dictionary  
Price: £8.00



## Tips to support maths at home

- ★ **Time** Talking about the time at which different things happen and looking at the clock together is a great way of learning about time.
- ★ **Counting everything** 'How many buses /lamp posts / squirrels have we seen?'
- ★ **Money** At the shops, talk about the items you buy: which are cheaper and which are more expensive?
- ★ **Going on a shape hunt** 'How many circles / triangles / squares can you see between here and home?'

## Resources on Oxford Owl

- Maths teaching methods explained
- Expert videos to help learning at home
- Fun maths games to play with your child

[www.oxfordowl.co.uk/starting-school](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/starting-school)

# Working with School

Both you and your child's teacher want the same thing – a happy, confident child who enjoys going to school and loves learning. By building an effective home/school partnership, both you and your child's teacher can achieve this aim together.

## Get involved

The best way you can support your child's school is by being an active parent:

- ★ Attending meetings for parents about the curriculum or other aspects of school life
- ★ Helping your child with their homework
- ★ Listening to them read
- ★ Making sure they're at school on time every day
- ★ Being available for meetings
- ★ Responding to messages from the school
- ★ Communicating with the school if there are any problems

## Parents' evening

Most schools hold parents' evenings every term, and they're a very important part of the relationship you develop with your child's school and their teacher.

If this is your first experience of a parents' evening, you don't need to feel apprehensive. Here are some ideas on how to get the most out of meeting with your child's teacher:

- ★ Check whether you should take your child with you, as this varies from school to school.
- ★ You may not see your child's work at every parents' evening. Very often the first meeting of the year is all about meeting for the first time and discussing aims and targets for the year.
- ★ Talk to your child and ask how things are going at school. Ask them what they would like you to ask the teacher. Afterwards, tell them how the meeting went.
- ★ Try to come away from the meeting with some positive steps that you, your child, and the teachers will take to help your child succeed.



# GREAT BOOKS FOR STARTING SCHOOL

## PREPARING FOR SCHOOL



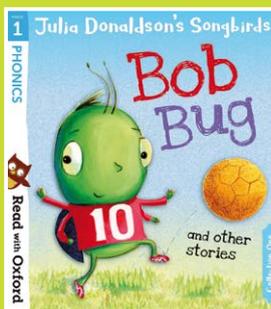
Read With Biff, Chip and Kipper:  
Let's Get Ready For School  
£12.99

Includes:

- *Starting School* storybook
- Write-in activity book
- Poster, stickers, certificate
- Parent guide to starting school

AVAILABLE  
**ONLINE**  
AND IN ALL GOOD  
BOOKSHOPS

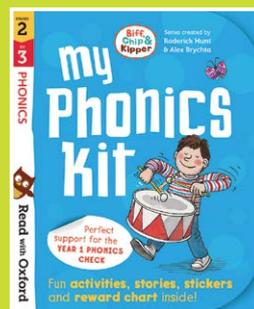
## PHONICS



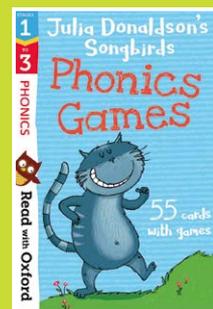
Songbirds: Bob Bug  
£10.99



RWI Phonics:  
My Reading and Writing  
Kit: Early sounds and  
blending £12.99

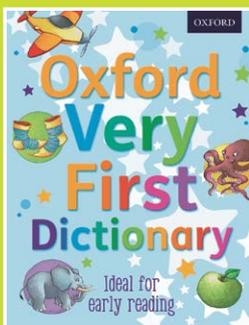


Read with Biff,  
Chip and Kipper:  
My Phonics Kit  
£12.99

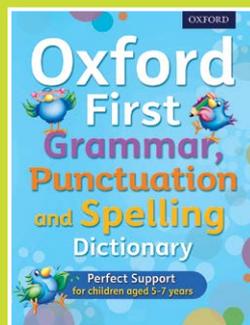


Songbirds Phonics  
Games Flashcards  
£6.99 inc Vat

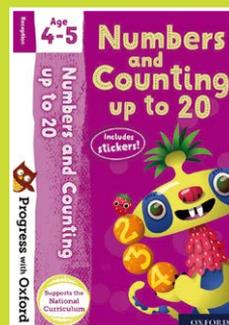
## DICTIONARIES



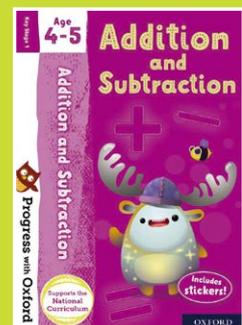
Oxford Very First  
Dictionary £6.99



Oxford First Grammar,  
Punctuation and Spelling  
Dictionary £9.99



Progress with Oxford:  
Numbers and  
Counting £3.99



Progress with  
Oxford: Addition and  
Subtraction £3.99

## MATHS