



Get set for Prep

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If you've received this kit, your child will be attending Queensland's new Preparatory Year, which replaced Preschool from 2007.

Prep will give all young Queenslanders the very best start to school by helping them make a smooth transition to Year 1 and setting them on the path to lifelong learning.

It will provide the foundation your child needs to succeed at school by developing:

- a positive approach to learning
- independence and confidence
- thinking and problem-solving skills
- language skills
- early literacy and numeracy
- physical abilities, including gross and fine motor skills.

The Queensland Government ran a trial of Prep in a number of schools from 2003 to 2006.

An independent review of the trial shows that Prep is very successfully promoting children's social and emotional development and their communication, numeracy, literacy and motor skills.

Prep is being offered full-time and children will attend from Monday to Friday during normal school hours – generally from 9 am to 3 pm.

Prep will be integrated fully into the rest of the school and classrooms and other facilities will be located on the same grounds as the primary school. This allows children to feel part of the broader school community and will help with their transition to Year 1.

The Queensland Government is supporting all education sectors to provide facilities that will make the Prep classroom a fun and exciting place to learn.

Prep classrooms generally consist of an open space for group and individual activities with a carpeted area for storytelling and singing. There will also be a kitchen or kitchenette, a preparation area and access to an outdoor learning area.

Prep classes will comprise up to 25 students. In some schools, Prep children may be included in composite classes with other early years students.

Your child may also need to wear a school uniform, but this will be up to individual schools so you should talk to your school about their uniform policy for Prep.

State school holidays and term dates 2008

School starts	29 January
Autumn holidays	5 April – 13 April 14 April is a student free day
Easter celebration	21 – 24 March
Winter holidays	28 June – 13 July 9 July is a student free day
Spring holidays	20 September – 5 October 20 October is a student free day
Summer holidays	13 December – 26 January 2009 Year 12 finish – 16 November Year 10 finish – 30 November



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What will your child do in Prep?

Prep teachers in state schools and most non-state schools will use the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines developed by the Queensland Studies Authority. The guidelines are based on the play- and inquiry-based approach to learning that has been a feature of Queensland's successful Preschool program.

Registered primary school teachers and preschool teachers will teach Prep. With their professional knowledge and expertise, these teachers are ideally qualified to teach Prep.

A key feature of Prep is that it makes connections between children's prior experiences at home, kindy or childcare and what they do at school.

In Prep your child will be actively involved in learning and will have opportunities to learn in many different ways – for example through investigation and play.

Children are encouraged to develop independence and personal organisational skills. Working with other children and adults is also an important life skill that is part of the Prep program.

In Prep, children will be:

- using blocks and manipulative equipment and creating collages to develop early mathematical concepts and skills
- drawing and painting to encourage oral language, reading and writing skills
- initiating and participating in dramatic play to build an understanding of the world around them
- writing stories and copying signs as part of their play
- playing and investigating independently, in pairs, small groups and as a whole class
- participating in outdoor activities

- actively making choices about what and how they learn
- investigating and learning how to find out about their interests
- planning with the teacher using a plan-do-reflect model
- participating in music and language experiences.

These learning experiences will help children to:

- understand and use language to group, sort and describe objects and to communicate ideas, feelings and needs
- develop early literacy and numeracy skills
- develop independence and problem-solving skills
- learn how to cooperate with others
- develop physical coordination skills
- listen, respond to and give directions
- increase self-confidence.



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Why is play important?

Children learn when they play. During play, they make decisions, solve problems, develop thinking skills, collaborate, communicate and develop a positive sense of self. As children grow older their play changes. It becomes more complex.

The table below shows examples of the types of play you might see in a Prep classroom.



Why is a positive approach to learning important?

Everyone wants their child to be happy at school. Our approach, or disposition to learning, helps us deal with all that goes on around us. Teachers always talk about a child's willingness to learn. A child might be very smart but may not have the disposition to learn. This is where family is so important. If families show how important it is to learn, children are encouraged to learn and, in turn, develop a positive disposition as well.

When teachers talk about dispositions, they are talking about a child's:

- willingness to explore
- ability to communicate
- levels of independence
- ability to work with others towards a common goal
- ability to keep going even when something may prove difficult
- confidence and curiosity to learn.

More information about the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines is available at www.qsa.qld.edu.au

Types of play	Examples
Socio-dramatic	Children setting up and running a flower shop
Fantasy	Children creating props for space adventures
Exploratory	Using blocks to investigate weight, height, number, shape and balance; looking through magnifying glasses to see how they work and the effect they have
Manipulative	Doing puzzles, making necklaces or constructions
Physical	Running, hopping, skipping, climbing, moving through obstacle courses
Games with rules	Playing board and card games, outdoor games, child-created games with rules

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Getting your child set for Prep

Starting school can be an exciting but stressful time for you and your child. For some children it may be the first time that they have been away from their parents. They may be going into a strange environment with unfamiliar people and things around them.

There are some simple steps you can take to help make your child's time at school more enjoyable and relaxed.

Encourage your child to be independent by helping them get used to:

- putting on and doing up his or her shoes
- eating and drinking without help (opening lunchboxes, wrapping and unwrapping school lunches and drinking from drink bottles)
- caring for and putting away play things
- using a handkerchief or tissue
- going to the toilet independently
- using playground equipment safely
- carrying his or her own bag
- identifying his or her own belongings.

Work with your child to develop his or her communication skills. Help your child to:

- make his or her own needs known
- use appropriate greetings
- respond verbally when spoken to.

Familiarise your child with the school environment and routine by:

- driving or walking by the school a few times so that the school becomes a familiar place
- attending an orientation program or open day so you can meet your child's teacher and see the classroom
- showing your child where to put his or her things, such as a school bag and hat
- making sure your child knows how to get home from school safely or where to wait for you in the afternoon or where to go for after-school care
- visiting the school, if possible, when other children are there so that your child can get used to the number of children, the playground and the movement of children around school grounds
- introducing your child to other children in the neighbourhood who will be attending the same school
- asking the school what equipment and materials are needed such as school bag, library bag and hat (most schools will have a list). Make sure all possessions are clearly labelled with your child's name
- checking with your pre-Prep provider (kindy, childcare) about how they can help children make a smooth transition to school
- encourage children to understand that teachers are at school to help.



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Making the first day a success

There are some simple steps you can take to make your child's first day at school more enjoyable and relaxed. Be prepared. The best thing you can do is to make the first day as stress-free and relaxed as possible.

The day before write a list of all you'll need to organise, such as food and a change of clothing. Stick the list to the fridge and tick each item off with your child as you complete it.

On the day:

- leave plenty of time to get ready
- make a nutritious breakfast — this is essential for sustained energy and concentration



- talk through the daily routine — start, lunch and finish times
- talk through a few simple self-help ideas — for example, asking teachers for help or directions
- be positive and encouraging about your child's attendance at school
- be flexible in the early days of school, children may take a little while to settle in.

Packing the school lunch

Being at school is hard work, so by lunchtime your child will be hungry and thirsty. They will need a nutritious and filling lunch.

When packing your child's lunch:

- provide healthy food and drink in realistic quantities for morning tea and lunch
- ensure that your child can open and unwrap their lunch — plastic film wrap can be very difficult for little fingers
- provide a variety of smaller items rather than one or two large items
- check with the school for information about healthy food and drink choices
- provide a water bottle every day and encourage your child to drink from it
- keep sweets, chips and other party food for parties or special occasions.

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How to get involved

As a parent, you play a vital role in your child's education. By getting involved in the school you can help your child make a smooth and happy start to their education.

You can do this by:

- introducing yourself to your child's teacher
- sharing information with your child's teacher
- keeping the teacher informed of any changes that may affect your child
- talking with your child about their day
- attending parent information sessions
- reading the school newsletter
- checking school bulletin boards
- attending family fun days
- participating in a safe walking to school program with other children or families who live nearby
- attending parent association meetings and talking to other parents
- volunteering to attend school excursions or participate in classroom activities
- participating in school working bees.
- Play card games and board games with your child. This helps to develop mathematical, problem-solving, language and social skills such as turn-taking and not always winning.
- Spend time together as a family — activities such as shopping, going to the park or working in the garden build children's awareness and knowledge of the world around them as well as develop language skills.
- Find opportunities to write with your child. This includes making lists for grocery shopping or things to take on trips and writing letters. These opportunities build children's awareness of vocabulary and the importance of reading and writing.
- Sing familiar songs and nursery rhymes together with your child.
- Show respect for your child's natural curiosity. Be patient and try to find the time to answer the many questions they ask or make ways to find answers together.
- Help your child become responsible by encouraging him or her to pass on school notices and newsletters or to pack his or her school bag each day.

Things you can do at home

You can also help your child progress at school by taking some simple steps at home:

- Take an interest in your child's schooling and value the importance of attending. Ask your child over dinner: 'What new things did you do at school today?'
- Read aloud to your child. Reading aloud helps develop the imagination, because it allows listeners to form a picture in their minds. It also helps develop an awareness of the patterns of language.
- Provide a variety of experiences to stimulate your child's imagination — for example, visit the zoo, park or airport.





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Ways your school can promote Prep

Below are some ideas on ways your school can positively promote your Prep classes and facilities.

Newsletters

- Keep current parents/carers informed about your Prep successes via the school newsletter. Include stories and anecdotes about Prep for example, personalised quotes.
- Highlight Prep enrolment dates and open days in your newsletter.

Email

- Email the latest news, updates and information on Prep to your school and wider community.

Posters/flyers

- Attach some flyers to each student's newsletter asking parents to give them to friends or place in neighbours' letterboxes.
- Place Prep posters in local shopping centres with school contact information. Poster template is available at iwww.qed.qld.gov.au/etrf/iprep.html
- Organise a display to go with the posters at the shopping centre with examples of the activities your Prep class does.
- Send the Prep poster, containing your school details, home with students asking parents to put it up in their workplace.
- Send information to local childcare/home day care centres and kindergartens.

Signage

- Utilise school noticeboards to promote Prep and enrolments.

Open Days/Nights

- Organise several small Prep open days, so future students and their parents/carers can come in and experience Prep.
- Host an information night with a tour of the Prep facilities.
- Invite the local childcare/home day care centres and kindergartens to visit your Prep classrooms.

Advertisements

- Place advertisements in local publications leading up to enrolment time. An advertisement template is available at: iwww.qed.qld.gov.au/etrf/iprep.html

Word of Mouth

- Follow up all Prep enquiries with a personalised letter or phone call.
- Some your current students could have siblings, relatives or friends entering Prep next year. Word of mouth is an excellent way to promote Prep, so keep your current parents/care givers informed.

School website

- Ensure up-to-date information about Prep is on your school website.
- List all the activities that your Prep class does.
- Provide information, benefits and links on Prep: www.education.qld.gov.au/prep

Other websites

- Additional information on promoting your school can be found at: www.ourcommunity.com.au