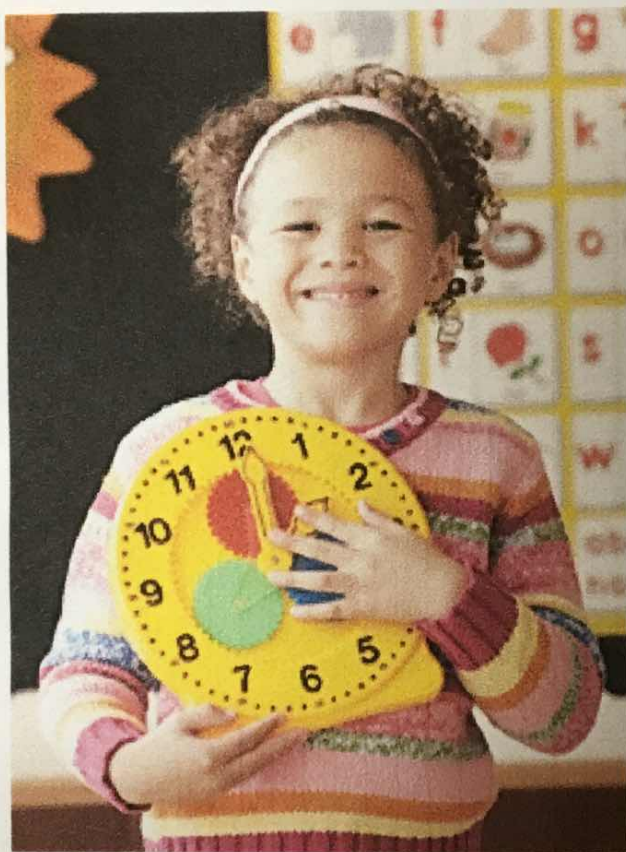


The Gift of Time



The benefits of
waiting an
extra year for
kindergarten

Five is not the magic age to enter kindergarten. A child's birthday does not mean that all aspects of development come together on that day. Children develop at different rates. And even within a child, different skills necessary for kindergarten develop at different times. While a child may be ready academically, they may need more time for social, emotional, or motor skills to develop.

If your teacher suggests that another year of preschool may be beneficial, we ask you to consider giving your child the gift of time.

Often, a child who needs more time is one with a birthday in the second half of the year. California and most other states have a September 1 age cut-off, some other states cut off earlier. Those with later birthdays, especially boys, as they tend to develop later than girls, should really be sure their child is ready. They will have many years of being a student. Why not give them the chance to be successful?

What are the benefits to waiting?

- ♦ **More confidence**

Allowing another year to grow and mature will foster confidence. As a child becomes more proficient in tasks that were previously difficult, the child gains confidence in other areas of their life as well. Most develop more of a "can do" attitude.

- ♦ **More leadership skills**

Most children who complete another year of preschool become leaders of their class. Now that they are part of the older students and they have already had a year of preschool, they naturally fall into more of a leadership role.

"Statistics show that children who are young for their grade are more easily led to negative behaviors; but those older in their class are more positive leaders."

Jennifer Burnett, Preschool Teacher, St. Paul's ECDC, Orange, CA

What are some of the benefits of waiting a year? While there is no concrete research, teachers and parents of children who did wait a year saw concrete changes in their children.

"As a current preschool teacher and parent of a child who was "red-shirted" at age 4, I really feel the best gift you can give your child is the gift of time. Time to be a kid, time to grow and learn - a chance to be on top rather than always on the bottom and struggling to catch up. My daughter was the first to get her driver's license - a big self-esteem boost and confidence builder. Also, she didn't seem to be as susceptible to peer pressure and was more the leader of her group. Maybe being older helped her make better choices as a teenager!"

Bobbi DeLaunay, Teacher and Supervisor of Education, Holy Cross Lutheran School,
Indianapolis, IN.

"We were advised to give our child an extra year in preschool at our spring conference. The decision in my heart I knew was right, but it was hard because I knew his friends would be starting kindergarten without him. While we knew that Ryan knew *some* of his numbers, letters, shapes, and colors, we were not concerned because we knew we could work with him. What did concern us was he wasn't interested in sitting and doing his work. He was happier playing. I rarely saw work come home and he just disliked coloring, cutting, and drawing. He rarely raised his hand or wanted to share with the class, even after being with most of them for a year and a half! When he was asked to do his work, he did it very quickly and you could see how painful it was for him. So, this was nature versus nurture and while we knew we could not change nature, we could nurture him one more year at Grace. Now that Ryan has stayed in preschool for a third year, we have seen such changes in his schoolwork, and he even enjoys doing work at home! I have received more artwork and projects than I ever could have imagined. He is always raising his hand in class (and has an answer!). He also is quite a leader and really cares for his fellow students' well being. It has been amazing what an extra year has done for him! I feel like he is so well prepared to start this new and important part of his little life. He has so much more confidence in himself and loves to help and be a leader now!

Carey Widergren, former Grace Lutheran Preschool parent

"Taking off my educator's hat and speaking as a mom, my own daughter had a birthday just 8 days after the cut-off. She was an early reader (before kindergarten) and academics always came easy to her, but we never regretted having her as one of the oldest in her class rather than trying to push her ahead. She was smaller in size

and a little quiet. The extra maturity was really a blessing when she hit all the peer pressures of Jr. High. We made it a point to keep her challenged with music lessons, etc. because we felt it was important for kids to know that not everything is so easy. As I tell parents of my students, it is more fun taking children to the library and finding ways to keep them challenged than to constantly be tutoring and playing catch-up at home. (She got some great scholarships when she graduated from high school last spring too!) The gift of time can be a good thing.

Bev Gruenwald, Early Childhood Ministry Director and Pre K Teacher, Abiding Savior Lutheran School, St. Louis, MO

If you are considering the gift of time for your child, consider the following list of kindergarten ready skills as they apply to your child. Your child need not master every skill on the list, but if your child is unable to do a lot of these tasks, then the extra year to grow may be beneficial to them.

- ♦ Can your child jump and hop?
- ♦ Can your child handle snaps, buttons, and zippers?
- ♦ Does your child make friends easily?
- ♦ Does your child participate in group activities?
- ♦ Can your child control their own behavior much of the time?
- ♦ Can your child sit still and listen to a story?
- ♦ Can your child sustain their attention for a 20 minute period?
- ♦ Can your child write their name, holding their pencil correctly?
- ♦ Can your child follow multi-step directions?
- ♦ Does your child recognize most letters of the alphabet and numbers 1-10?
- ♦ Can your child cut on a line, holding the scissors correctly?
- ♦ Can your child take turns?
- ♦ Can your child repeat a pattern?

While you weigh your options, be sure to consult with your child's preschool teacher. Observing next year's kindergarten class to see what the children are doing, can also provide valuable insight. Each family has their own set of circumstances to take into account. But whatever you decide, do not forget to consult the Master Teacher himself, Jesus. Our prayers are with you as you make this decision.

"Cast all your cares on Him because He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7