



## Preparing for prep - January 2007

You've probably heard 'prep' is THE NEW PRE-SCHOOL but what does that mean for your child?

'Prep' is short for 'preparatory schooling', which is replacing what we know as pre-school. For most schools, pre-school was a part-time lead in to starting Grade 1. Whereas pre-school usually involved attendance three days a week, prep school will be a full-time, five-day alternative. At this stage it is optional, however it's expected the majority of children will attend.

Although the year your child will start prep is the same as pre-school (the year they turn five), when the year starts is different. Traditionally the year was January to December. Now, with prep, the pre-school year is July to June. As this will be your child's first experience of school, there are a number of skills and strategies you need to help them with before they start.

**School familiarisation:** Be sure to attend any information days as this will help your child learn their way around their new school. They will also feel more confident having met their teachers. This time is also a good opportunity to teach your child how to use a water cooler, so they can get a drink if needed.

**Having the essentials ready:** It's important to ensure your child has all the required items when they head off for their first day. Starting school can be a difficult time that can become even more confusing if your child doesn't have the required items in their backpack.

**Being self-sufficient:** Insist your child carries their belongings from day one. If you carry all their items for them the first day or week, they may think this is how it's to be done. It's then very difficult to change their expectations. Also make sure your child can put on their own socks and shoes (Velcro shoes are a great option for littlies if the school allows them).

**Emergency supplies:** It's a good idea to discreetly place a change of underwear and shorts (the same style as the school ones) in your child's backpack (at the bottom in a clip-seal plastic bag). That way, they'll be prepared if they have a toilet accident. Be sure to talk to them about how to go about getting changed if needed and check they know where the toilets are and which is the right one to use.

**Making new friends:** Prep is an opportunity for your child to widen their circle of friends. Set them on the right track by smiling and greeting people as you enter the school and make your way to the classroom. If you are friendly towards others, your child is likely to follow your lead.

**Watching for tiredness:** As your child will be attending prep full-time, you'll need to be more aware of how tired they'll be. Take the time to notice their mood. Are they over-reacting to small incidents and does it take a long time to get them to sleep? These are signs of over-tiredness. You may need to compensate for this by having more wind-down time at the end of the day.