

Ready, Here I Come!

A Solid Foundation Course for Parents

Play

Session **1**




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Session **1**

Name _____



Play is much more than fun and leisure time for your child. It's work. In fact, through the play process children learn 'their way.' They connect their inside and outside worlds together and create their own unique experience. No textbook can teach that!



William Page
Play is Work

Welcome to

Ready, Here I Come!

A Solid Foundation Course for Parents

Session 1

My name is _____, and I am your group leader. We will meet for three sessions in the *Ready, Here I Come!* course. In each session, we will receive a new manual that contains information and activities. I will read the lessons in the manuals and guide our group through the activities.

You might think you could read these lessons instead of listening to me. But part of the fun of the course will be learning together and participating in the activities and discussions in the manuals. I'll appreciate your support.

Each session lasts about 90 minutes. New information is presented in each session. The first session contains the most information. In the next two sessions, more time is devoted to discussion. At the conclusion of the third session, we will hold a graduation ceremony. Those of us who attend all three sessions will receive certificates.

Ready, Here I Come! is a very practical, take-it-home-and-use-it course. Between sessions, we complete tasks with our families. Our work at home with our families is the most important part of this course.

Our work at home with our families is the most important part of this course.

Getting Acquainted

Please write my name and telephone number in your manual. I want you to feel free to call me between sessions if you have questions.

Group Leader's Name: _____

Group Leader's Telephone Number: (_____) _____

EXERCISE



PARTNERS

To get to know each other better, I will assign each of us to a partner. If we have an odd number in the group, I will take two partners. Then we will take two minutes to talk with our partners. At the end of that time, we will each introduce our partner to the group and tell the names of our partner's children. If we learn any other interesting information about our partner, we can tell that too.

Group Leader: Assign partners. Allow two minutes. Begin introductions.

Partner's name: _____

Names of partner's children: _____

TELL THE GROUP



I'll introduce my partner first and tell the names of my partner's children.

Then my partner will introduce me. Then we will continue until everyone has been introduced.

APPLAUD



APPLAUD AFTER EACH INTRODUCTION.

EXERCISE



NAME OF GROUP MEMBERS

Now write the first name of each group member below. Need help? Check the name tags. This list will help us remember everyone's name.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Ready or Not

Session 1

By a certain age, all children start school: ready or not. *Ready, Here I Come!* is a course for parents of preschool children, to help all children arrive at school ready for a lifetime of learning.

Based on research that has identified the skills children need to succeed in school, *Ready, Here I Come!* gives parents practical activities that help children develop these important skills. *Ready, Here I Come!* also enables parents to talk with each other about their children.

Ready, Here I Come! addresses the five skill areas most important to school readiness. They are: gross-motor skill, fine-motor skill, language, visual discrimination, and memory. In *Ready, Here I Come!* parents do not “teach skills” to their children; instead they share with their children activities that enhance development. The parent-child relationship is the key ingredient in the activities.

Each step in *Ready, Here I Come!* is important. Some of the activities will be familiar to us; others will be new. Putting all these activities together is what makes *Ready, Here I Come!* an exciting experience for parents and children.

EXPECTATIONS

EXERCISE

In what ways do you expect your family to benefit from your participation in this course?

I'll tell how I expect my family to benefit; then I'll ask each of you to do the same.



TELL THE GROUP

Play

Play is the vocation of childhood. Children play in order to learn, to grow, to develop. Their play includes the vivid fantasies of their imaginative minds, imitation of the world around them, free frolic, private play acting, and games. Play is natural to childhood, and all children will find their own ways to play.

It is not necessary for parents to structure all of their children's play. In fact, much of the power of play in children's development comes from the child's increasing ability to create his own activities. But parents can use a child's natural love of play to introduce and encourage certain skills that will enhance the child's readiness for school.

In this session of *Ready, Here I Come!*, we will look at several ways to get children ready for school through special kinds of play during their preschool years. The term "preschool" needs definition: preschool applies to children from three to five years of age. It includes both children who attend preschool programs and those who do not.

We will discuss a variety of activities for children; some activities will be more appropriate for three year olds and others for five year olds. But we won't worry about age differences, because even children of the same age vary greatly in their interest in the same activity. Our children's interest in the activities will be the best gauge of the appropriateness of the activities for them. So we will try what we like with our children and see what works. Then we can return to our parent group at the next session and discuss our experiences.

*Play is the vocation of
childhood.*

Lesson 1: Large Muscle Play

Session 1

When we paint a mental picture of the joy of childhood, we probably see children engaged in motion—running, climbing, jumping, crawling, kicking, swinging, pushing, and pulling. Unfettered, active children thrill to the sensation of movement. This form of play is not only fun, it exercises and coordinates the large muscles of the body. Children develop gross-motor skills. Gross-motor skills are abilities that use the large muscles of the body. All of the “-ing” words listed above—running, climbing, jumping, and the rest—are examples of gross-motor skills.

Most children get plenty of opportunity to develop gross-motor skills. Sometimes we think they never stop moving the large muscles in their arms and legs. But in this age of technology, it is also easy for children to fall into habits of passiveness. Watching television does not develop gross-motor skills.

ACTIVE/PASSIVE

EXERCISE

On a typical day, how much time (in hours and minutes) does your preschool child spend with each of the following?

Watching television: _____

Large-muscle play: _____

Low-activity play: _____

Computer or video game play: _____

What types of large-muscle play does your child practice?

I'll tell how much time my child typically spends with various activities and what forms of large-muscle play he/she practices; then I'll ask each of you to do the same.

TELL THE GROUP

**TAKING IT
HOME**

“Animal Walks” is an activity that helps children develop gross-motor skills. We can teach them to imitate the way various animals walk. For example:



Kangaroo Hop: Crouch, with the fingers on the floor between the knees. Jump up and forward, with the body stretched. Land in a crouched position.



Circus Seal: Lie face-down. Raise upper part of the body with the arms. Walk with the hands while dragging the feet. Try circus tricks with a bean bag on the head.



Inchworm: Put the hands on the floor. Keep the knees straight and walk with little steps until the feet are near the hands. Move the hands forward and repeat.



Frog Hop: Squat. Jump forward on both feet.



Giraffe Walk: With the arms stretched overhead, clasp hands together to form the giraffe’s head and neck. Walk on tiptoes.



Flamingo Stand: Stand on one foot with arms crossed at the chest. Later, try this with eyes closed.



Dog Walk: Walk on all fours (hands and feet) with the knees slightly bent. Later, try to run. For a lame dog, walk on one foot and two hands.

Once our children understand the way these animals walk, we can ask them to create their own imitations of other animals. They can swing their heads like an elephant; they can crawl like a snake. Outdoors, they can run like a horse.

Lesson 2: Small Muscle Play

Session 1

Children first develop coordination and strength in their large muscles, even when little muscles like those in their hands are a bit unskilled. But school requires children to operate pencils, scissors, and crayons. These skills use the same small-muscle coordination that it takes to button shirts, tie shoes, and brush teeth. Children who can run like a horse may not be ready to thread a needle. Play helps children develop fine-motor (small-muscle) skills. Fine-motor play provides wonderful indoor activity.

“**Kitchen Clay**” offers a variety of fine-motor activities for children. Children learn to measure the ingredients, mix the batter, knead the dough-like clay. When the clay is formed, the children can roll it with a rolling pin, cut it with a plastic knife, form it into shapes with their fingers, and press it into shapes with cookie cutters or jar lids.



**TAKING IT
HOME**

Recipe for Kitchen Clay

2 cups flour

1/2 cup water

3/4 cup salt

food coloring (if you want colored clay)


1 tablespoon salad oil

plastic bag (for storage)

*Play helps children develop
fine-motor (small muscle)
skills.*

Ready, Here I Come!

TAKING IT HOME

 “Cutting and Pasting” is an activity that develops fine-motor skills. With a stack of paper, magazines, or plain paper, and a pair of scissors and glue, children will work their little fingers while making their own creations. Some children enjoy looking through magazines to find pictures that pertain to certain topics. The pictures can then be cut out of the magazines and glued on construction paper to tell a story. Topics might include: favorite foods; sports; animals; people I’d like to meet; places I’d like to visit. Much of the fun for parents comes in hearing the child tell why she chose the pictures.

EXERCISE



CUT AND PASTE

What topic would your preschooler find most interesting for a “Cut and Paste” story?

TELL THE GROUP



I’ll tell the topic I think my preschooler would most enjoy. Then each group member will do the same.

Lesson 3: Language in Play

Session 1

Children love to play with words. Rhymes and verses are repeated over and over again. They like the sound of words. They invent words and are delighted with their inventions. School, of course, is a very verbal institution. At school, children learn to read and to write. They receive verbal instructions from their teacher. They express themselves with words. Preparing a child for school means preparing a child to deal with words.

WORDS THAT ARE FUN

EXERCISE

Think of fun words from your own childhood or fun words your children have enjoyed. The words may have been used to describe something. They may be funny names for people in the family or nicknames. They may be crazy words someone made up. They may be silly words from a song, story, book, or movie.

Fun Words: _____

I'll tell about one of my fun words; then I'll ask each of you to do the same. Let's explain why the word is fun and what it means.



TELL THE GROUP

“Family Fun-Word Journal.” Keeping a family journal of fun words and their meanings will provide a source of good memories in the future. The journal may also include favorite phrases, rhymes, and verses.



TAKING IT HOME

“Welephant” is fun for preschoolers. Take turns adding a letter sound to the beginning of familiar words. This is a good way to learn letter sounds.



TELL THE GROUP

Ready, Here I Come!

**TAKING IT
HOME**

“**Endings**” is a great game to play with children. Start a sentence, then ask the child to finish the sentence. At first, the sentence may be finished with one word. Encourage the child to stretch the sentence, finishing it with several words. Older children may even stretch the sentences into short stories. Examples of sentences are:

“I walked around the corner and saw a...”

“She found the little kitten in the...”

“I woke up in the middle of the night when I heard a...”

“The sky is...”

Lesson 4: Alike and Different

Session 1

Understanding categories is an important skill in school. Placing things in categories means first knowing how they are alike, and knowing how other things are different. In any game or play activity that uses visual discrimination (seeing differences), it is important to discuss with the child why she thinks the objects are alike or different.

“Alike and Different.” A nature walk or stroll through the neighborhood can provide an opportunity to play “Alike and Different.” Ask your child to find two flowers that are the same color or two flowers that are different shapes. Ask the child to explain how two leaves are alike or are different. Let the child ask you to find two “alikes” or two “differents.” Cars, houses, signs and other objects can also be used.



**TAKING IT
HOME**

“Where are the Bs?” Where are the “ands?” Ask your child to search through a newspaper and circle all of a specified letter or a simple word. This is a good way to develop the skill of recognizing categories while also learning letters and words.



**TAKING IT
HOME**

*Understanding categories is
an important skill in school.*

Ready, Here I Come!

EXERCISE



OBSERVING IN PARTICULAR

To see “differences” and “alikes” requires keen observation. Don’t overlook the obvious. How are you and your child alike? How are you different?

Alike:

We both_____

We both_____

We both_____

Different:

My child is_____but I am_____

My child is_____but I am_____

My child is_____but I am_____

TELL THE GROUP



I’ll tell how my child and I are alike and different. Then each group member will do the same.

Lesson 5: Memory

Session 1

Remembering accurately depends on first capturing the information to be remembered. This requires concentration.

Some games and play activities require both concentration and memory.

“PATTERNS, patterns, PATTERNS” is a game that can be played with simple, household objects. Gather a few small objects, such as checkers, buttons, Cheerios, and beads. Make a simple pattern with three of the objects. For example, place in a row a button, a checker, and another button. After your child has had a chance to look at the pattern, mix up the objects and ask the child to repeat the pattern. You can make the pattern gradually more difficult by adding more objects and by placing the objects in more complicated patterns—form a cross or a circle, for example. Let your child create patterns for you to repeat.



**TAKING IT
HOME**

“Matching” is a card game that requires both concentration and discrimination. Cut 14 squares of white paper. Draw a different shape on each of 7 of the squares—circle, rectangle, square, star, triangle, diamond, oval. Now draw the same shapes on the other 7 squares of paper so that you have a matched set for each shape. Turn all the cards upside down. Ask your child to turn over two cards at a time. If the cards match, he may keep them. If they do not match, he turns them upside down again. Soon your child will remember the location of each shaped card. The game can also be played with numbers, letters, cut-out pictures, and playing cards.



**TAKING IT
HOME**

I REMEMBER WHEN

What was your child’s first word?_____

What is your favorite memory of your child from his/her first year?

I’ll tell the group my two memories. Then each group member will do the same.











**TELL THE
GROUP**

Play

Key Points








Let's review the key points from this session:

-  Five developmental areas important to school readiness are: gross-motor skill, fine-motor skill, language, visual discrimination, and memory.
-  Play is the vocation of childhood.
-  Gross-motor skills use the large muscles of the body.
-  Fine-motor skills use small muscles, like those in the hand.
-  School is a very verbal institution.
-  Preparing a child for school means preparing a child to deal with words.
-  Visual discrimination is the ability to see how things are alike and different.
-  Memory requires concentration.

We have learned that children's natural enjoyment of play can be used to prepare them for school. Now it is time to put our learning into practice. Listed below are our activities for the week.

We will try as many of these activities as possible with our preschool children. Of course, the child's interest in the activity will indicate the activity's appropriateness for the child. At the next session, we will share our experiences with the Activities for the Week.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

-  Play "Animal Walks" with my child
-  Help my child make "Kitchen Clay" and help him/her play with it.
-  Help my child cut pictures from magazines related to a topic and glue the pictures on paper. I will listen to my child tell about the pictures.
-  Keep a Family Fun-Word Journal (*See form in the back of this manual*).
-  Play "Welephant" and/or "Endings" with my child.
-  Play "Alike and Different" and/or "Where are the B's?" with my child.
-  Play "PATTERNS, patterns, PATTERNS" and/or "Matching" with my child.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Children are active learners; their minds seek out appropriate new opportunities to learn. When parents and children spend time together, the opportunities for learning are amplified. Parents can “model” activities, and children will learn by imitation. Parents can ask questions, and children will answer. Better yet, parents can encourage children to ask questions. Each new skill requires a certain level of readiness. This is why a five year old may be interested in an activity that a three year old will find unappealing. Also, interest in an activity will vary among children of the same age.

In trying the Activities for the Week, trust your child’s interest in the activity. All the activities in *Ready, Here I Come!* should be enjoyable interactions between parent and child. If your child balks or seems uninterested, try something else or try again another time. Let the activities occur naturally within your daily interaction with your child. The object of Activities for the Week is not to “complete the assignments for the course,” nor is it to “test your child.” The Activities for the Week provide a variety of parent-child interactions that are focused on the five areas of development important to school readiness. Enjoy the activities, and look forward to the next session of *Ready, Here I Come!* when you will share your experiences with the other parents.

When parents and children spend time together, the opportunities for learning are amplified.

Closing the Session

Session 1

We will take home this manual to help us with our activities for the week. You have my name and telephone number so you can call me during the week if you have questions.

I will collect the pencils so we will have them at the next session.

Group Leader: Collect pencils.

The next page in this manual is a tear-out page. We can place the tear-out page in a prominent place in our homes (like on the refrigerator). A Family Fun-Word Journal is in the back of this manual.

The lessons we have learned in this session are just the beginning of *Ready, Here I Come!*. In the next two sessions, we will learn more ways to help our children prepare for school. We will also take time to talk about our children's responses to the activities.

Good luck with the activities for the week! Let's make good things happen for our families.

APPLAUD FOR A GREAT FIRST SESSION! COME ON, A BIG, HEARTY ROUND OF APPLAUSE.



APPLAUD

Ready, Here I Come!

Activities for Week #1

**Kitchen
Clay**

**Animal
Walks**

**Family
Fun Word
Journal**

**Cut and
Paste**

**Welephant
and/or
Endings**

**Alike and
Different and/
or Where are
the Bs?**

**PATTERNS,
Patterns,
PATTERNS and/
or Matching**

FAMILY FUN-WORD JOURNAL

Keep track of fun words your children enjoy. The words may be used to describe something. They may be funny names for people in the family or nicknames. They may be crazy words someone made up. They may be silly words from a song, story, book, or movie.

Fun Word: _____ Date: _____

Which family member first used the word? _____

Meaning of the word: _____

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Academic Development Institute

Founded in 1984

The Academic Development Institute (ADI) works with families, schools, and communities so that all children may become self-directed learners, avid readers, and responsible citizens, respecting themselves and those around them. ADI's vision is of an American landscape filled with distinct school communities reflecting the hopes and dreams of the people intimately attached to them. To this image of the school as a community, ADI is devoted. When the school functions as a community, its constituents (students, parents, teachers, staff) associate with one another and share common values about the education of children. At the root, members of the school community assume responsibility for one another. Those children become our children, and parents are not external agents, but full partners in the education of their children and of each other's children. Teachers are not isolated practitioners of pedagogy, but professionals integrated into the web of community and buoyed by common purpose.



Academic Development Institute

121 N. Kickapoo Street

Lincoln, IL 62656

(217) 732-6462

(217) 732-3696 (fax)

www.adi.org

