

# Ready for School

# ABC Ready for School

An Alphabet of Social Skills

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Celeste C. Delaney  
Illustrated by Stephanie Fizer Coleman





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**Free Spirit Publishing Inc.**  
6325 Sandburg Road, Suite 100  
Minneapolis, MN 55427-3674  
(612) 338-2068  
[help4kids@freespirit.com](mailto:help4kids@freespirit.com)  
[www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com)

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To all the children in my life who have taught me so much—  
especially my first students: Mikeah, Joseph, and Erin.

And to the teachers who helped me with ideas for preparing children for kindergarten:  
Mikeah Sleigh, Erin Jennings, Kellie Cox, and Samantha Dorsch.  
You do the hard work of teaching our children every day. Thank you!



## A Note to Caring Adults

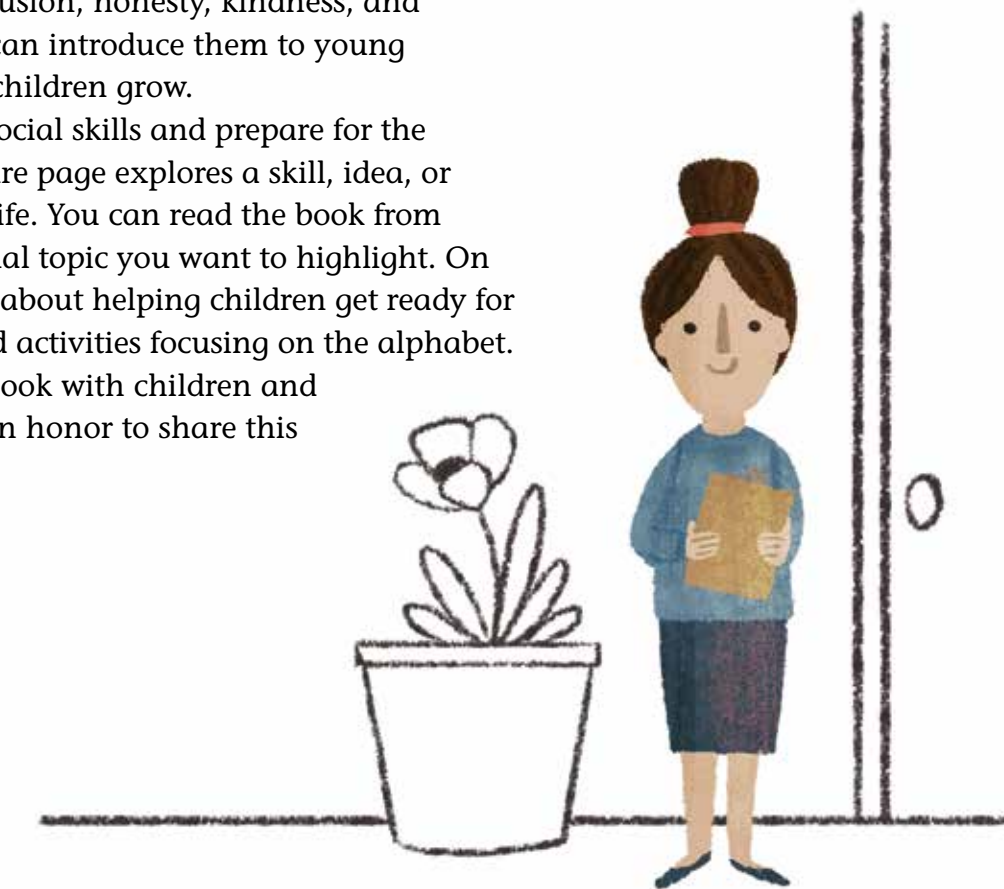
Starting school is an exciting time in a child's life, both for the child and for parents, teachers, and caregivers who work with the child. It can also be challenging. Transitioning from being a toddler at play to being a little person functioning in a group with the structure, rules, and expectations of preschool or kindergarten isn't always easy. There is so much to learn! Every child is born with unique strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. The skills needed to do well are learned along the way: How to walk, talk, read, add, and subtract. How to share with others, embrace differences, be a good listener, and so much more.

Social skills are not just necessary for doing well in school. They are also necessary for success in life. It is up to us as adults to teach and model them. Concepts like forgiveness, perseverance, inclusion, honesty, kindness, and generosity take time to understand, but we can introduce them to young children in simple ways and foster them as children grow.

This book helps children learn essential social skills and prepare for the big step of beginning school. Each ABC picture page explores a skill, idea, or attitude that will be useful at school and in life. You can read the book from start to finish, or you can choose an individual topic you want to highlight. On pages 30–35 you will find more information about helping children get ready for school, ideas for practicing specific skills, and activities focusing on the alphabet.

I hope you will have fun exploring this book with children and being part of their learning adventure! It's an honor to share this journey with you.

—Celeste





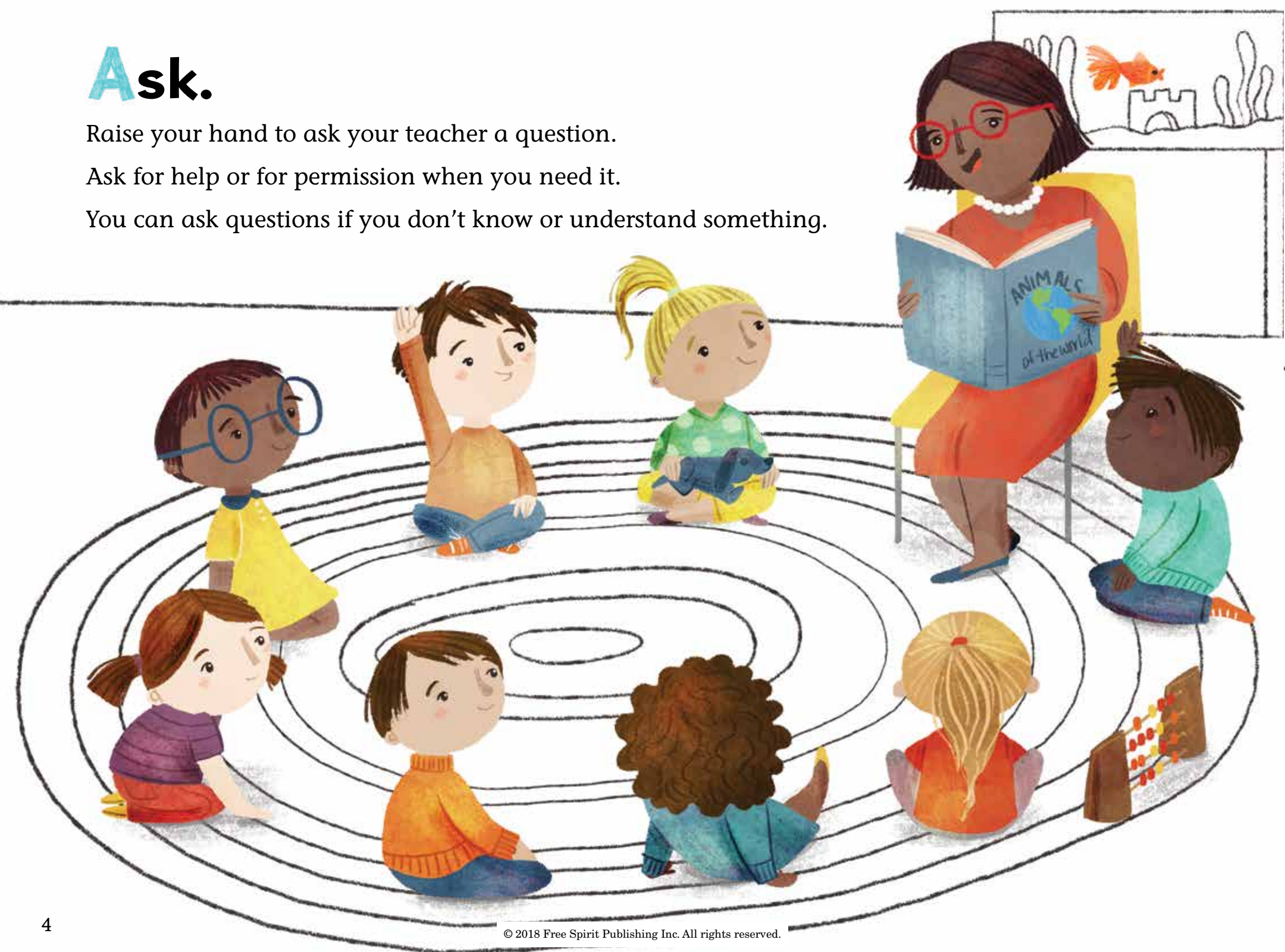
Soon you'll be starting the big adventure of going to school.  
You will learn, grow, make new friends, and have fun!  
Here are some ideas to help you get ready for school.





# Ask.

Raise your hand to ask your teacher a question.  
Ask for help or for permission when you need it.  
You can ask questions if you don't know or understand something.



# Be.

Be yourself and be your best.  
Always tell the truth. Be honest.  
Be trustworthy. Do what you say you will do.



## Getting Ready for School: Activities and Information for Teachers, Parents, and Caregivers

In many ways, kindergarten is the most important year in a child's education. It sets the stage for how children view themselves as students and how they view learning in general. If children start school well below the skill level of most of their classmates, they may feel bad about not knowing what everyone else seems to know, and they might conclude that they are not as smart as others. Without encouragement, they may begin to misbehave in class, avoid participating in difficult work, and give up on learning. On the other hand, if you are helping a child who is eager to learn and has already mastered key academic concepts, consider developing his or her abilities in areas such as art, music, or sports. Not being challenged enough can lead to boredom and misbehavior, too. And while teachers can often find these children higher level work to do, these learners may still have to work alone at times while teachers work with the other children. In these moments, students may need to rely on their self-regulation skills and other abilities. At the same time, they will be learning and strengthening social skills through working and playing with their peers. For *all* learners, kindergarten brings many valuable lessons in sharing, compassion, cooperation, and other ideas that are just as important as academic aptitude.

### What Kids Need to Know Before They Go

Children naturally begin kindergarten with a wide range of abilities and readiness, both in academic knowledge and social skills. This is normal, and teachers are prepared for it. Nevertheless, the better prepared a child can be on the first day of school, the more likely it is that he or she will learn confidently and enjoy being at school. To help children prepare, parents, preschool teachers, and other caring adults can support kids as they practice and strengthen important academic and social skills *before* beginning kindergarten. The skills list on page 34 is a guideline for this practice. It reflects skills that most teachers like to see in children when they start kindergarten, and which typically make the transition to school smoother. This list will help you see areas where a child could use additional guidance before school begins. It is *not*, however, an ironclad set of requirements. If children do not have all of these abilities before starting kindergarten, it's not cause for alarm. Social and motor skills are continually evolving, and children can continue to work on skills at school and at home with the encouragement of adults. You can also download the



bonus piece "My Child Isn't Ready for School. What Can I Do to Help?" at [freespirit.com/ABC](https://www.freespirit.com/ABC) to learn other ways to provide support, such as meeting with the teacher before school starts or getting children involved in other social settings to build group social skills.

### Why Are Social Skills So Important?

Social skills can be a challenge for children of all abilities. As children adjust to being in school, it's important to give these skills just as much attention as academic topics. After all, life is lived in social settings. At home, children learn to be part of a family, which includes learning skills like the importance of respecting adults, sharing toys, forgiving others, following family rules, using good manners, and playing well together.

In the broader setting of school, children will meet people they don't know. They will learn to make friends, respect others, follow directions and school rules, take turns, and share. They will also learn bigger concepts such as understanding and accepting that people come from different backgrounds and have different abilities. They will discover their own strengths and difficulties and learn about perseverance, helping others, being honest, and working hard.

As children navigate these settings and others throughout their lives, those who have developed strong social skills will experience many benefits. They will get along well with others, which in turn will help them be happier, more confident, and more eager to go to school. They'll be able to communicate their needs clearly and help others do the same. They'll be less vulnerable to bullying or peer pressure and better able to develop healthy friendships.

Gaining these skills also has other important, lasting results. Studies show that children who learn to relate well to others at a young age are less likely to drop out of school or get into other serious trouble as teenagers. As these teens grow into adults, they will carry these social skills into the workplace and community, benefiting both themselves and those around them. Positive social interactions help make life meaningful and successful. They strengthen relationships and society as a whole as people respect, understand, and help each other. So it is well worth investing time and effort into helping children learn and master these valuable skills.

