

## About kindergarten

### What is kindergarten?

Kindergarten (also called preschool) is a program for young children delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher.

### Why should my child go to kindergarten?

Kindergarten is an important step for young children and is strongly recommended for all children.

Research shows that kindergarten improves children's health and wellbeing, helps them to develop strong social skills and encourages a love of learning.

Children who go to a kindergarten program are more independent and confident and are more likely to make a smooth transition to primary school (Prep).

### What happens at a kindergarten?

A high-quality kindergarten program will offer your child a range of learning experiences and activities that are both stimulating and fun. Your child's learning and curiosity will be encouraged through experiences and activities, such as exploring the natural world, being exposed to new ideas and solving problems.

Your child will be able to:

- learn to work with others and make friends through group activities and cooperative play
- express their creativity, for example, through dance, movement and art
- build their communication skills by listening to and having conversations with the educators and other children
- develop the skills that they need for reading, writing and mathematics.

### Where can I find a kindergarten?

Some kindergartens run as stand-alone services (for example, community kindergartens). Other kindergarten programs are run through long day care centres or schools.

To find a kindergarten program in your local area (or area of choice) visit [www.education.vic.gov.au/findaservice](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/findaservice) or contact your local council, which you can find by visiting [www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/find-your-local-council](http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/find-your-local-council).

The **Choosing a kindergarten** program information sheet has advice about choosing a kindergarten program that suits your family.

### All children can attend kindergarten

Kindergarten is for all children. If your child has a disability or learning difficulty, the educators will talk with you about how the program and environment can support your child.

If you need support to enrol your child in a kindergarten program or to find a program that suits your family contact your local council.

**Go to page 2** for information about subsidies.

### How much does kindergarten cost?

The Victorian Government provides funding to services to contribute to the cost of running a funded kindergarten program, which helps keep fees for four-year-old kindergarten as low as possible.

Look for this certificate, which shows that a kindergarten program receives funding from the Victorian Government and is delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher.

Services that offer kindergarten programs often charge fees to help meet the cost of running the programs. Fees are set by individual services and can vary depending on how many hours your child attends, group size and extra costs such as excursions.

### How many hours a week can my child go to kindergarten?

Most four-year-old kindergarten programs are offered for 15 hours a week.

Children go to a kindergarten program in the year before starting school, usually when they are four years old. Some services also offer kindergarten programs for three-year-olds.

The **Choosing a kindergarten program** information sheet has advice about choosing the best time for your child to start kindergarten.

### **Free or low cost kindergarten for children in the year before school**

The Victorian Government subsidises fees for some children so they can attend kindergarten for free or at low cost in the year before they start primary school, usually when they are four years old.

Your child is eligible if they:

- are an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- are a triplet or quadruplet
- hold (or have a parent or guardian who holds) an eligible concession card or refugee, humanitarian or asylum seeker visa.

Ask your child's kindergarten educator or service manager if you think your child may be eligible for a fee subsidy.

### **Free kindergarten for three-year-olds**

The Victorian Government subsidises fees for some children so they can attend kindergarten for free two years before they start primary school, usually when they are three years old.

Your child is eligible to attend free kindergarten if they are at least three years old by 30 April and:

- are an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- are known to Child Protection, or referred by Child Protection to Child FIRST.

If your child has had a free program two years before school, they can attend a four-year-old program the next year for free or at low cost.

Ask your child's kindergarten educator or service manager for more information about free kindergarten programs for three-year-olds.

### **Do you need an interpreter?**

The Victorian Government provides a free interpreter service for families attending funded kindergarten programs. Ask your child's kindergarten educator or service manager to call the free interpreter service.

### **Related links**

Choosing a kindergarten program – This information sheet has advice about choosing a kindergarten program – that suits your family and choosing the best time for your child to start kindergarten.

Free or low cost kindergarten –

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/kindergarten/Pages/fees.aspx>

Free kindergarten for three year-olds ñ

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/kindergarten/Pages/earlystart.aspx>