

“Preschool Necessity – A Requirement for the Modern Age”



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“Preschool” is still a relatively new concept in our society. In the past, many of us went directly to first grade or, at most, attended Anganwadi. There is a strong belief in our culture that preschool education (aside from Anganwadi) is a part of the commercialization of education. There are reasons for this, but as times change, our lifestyle is changing too. Joint families are transforming into nuclear families, and we, who once lived close to nature, are now confined to urban life, surrounded by four walls. As a result, children today no longer have the opportunity to learn from grandparents or other elders at home. Therefore, we must accept that the “preschool system” is necessary for children’s development.

What is Preschool?

Preschool can be referred to by various names such as Nursery School, Pre-primary School, Playschool, Child Care, Anganwadi, etc. It is a one-year system that provides early childhood education to children before they start formal primary school. Preschools generally operate from morning to afternoon. During this time, children learn life values and lay the foundation for future education. This helps them adjust better to the school environment when they eventually transition to formal education.

What is the Right Age?

Parents often wonder at what age they should send their child to preschool. While most preschools accept children around the age of two and a half, the decision lies with the parents. Not every child at the same age develops physically, socially, or mentally in the same way. A child’s development must be considered before making the important decision to send them to school. When a child is physically and mentally ready to attend preschool, it becomes easier for them to adjust. At this stage, the child should be able to do basic tasks like eating, drinking water, using the toilet, washing hands after play, and sleeping alone. The child should also be able to understand simple instructions and communicate their feelings (even through gestures). Parents should teach these basic skills at home before sending the child to preschool to ensure a smooth transition into

the school environment, making it a fun and enjoyable experience.

The Role of Daycare Centers:

Children often spend considerable time in daycare centers. These centers are helpful, especially when both parents are working. It is important that children enjoy the teachers’ company and the daycare environment. Children in center-based care tend to show more development than those raised at home. They get more opportunities to interact with other children and have access to better learning materials. Additionally, staff at daycare centers typically receive more training to handle young children.

Activities in Preschool:

In preschool, children develop physical, social, emotional, language, and awareness skills. They are encouraged to explore their thoughts and engage in activities that help them learn. The focus is on helping children use their intellectual capabilities and pay attention to physical movement. Simple activities are designed to help children learn through play.

Benefits of Preschool Education:

1. **Development of Independence:** Preschool helps children develop a sense of independence. They learn to make choices and pursue their interests. This skill proves to be beneficial in the future.
2. **Responsibility and Alertness:** Children learn to do everyday tasks like eating, sleeping, and washing hands independently. This builds a responsible and alert mindset.
3. **Improved Communication Skills:** Interaction with peers enhances communication abilities. A variety of activities help develop the child’s personality.
4. **Emotional Expression:** Preschool provides children the opportunity to play and learn in groups, which helps them express their emotions more freely. They also learn to concentrate through activities like storytelling and reading.
5. **Discipline and Time Management:** Children learn discipline and time management through daily routines at preschool. They follow specific schedules, which encourages creativity and curiosity.



How to Choose the Best Preschool?

When selecting a preschool, it is important to keep the following aspects in mind:

1. **Child Safety:** Ensure the preschool has adequate safety measures, including first-aid facilities and fire safety systems.
2. **Teacher Quality:** Teachers are crucial to the child's overall development. It's important to evaluate their ability to provide care and education. A competent teacher positively impacts the child's growth.
3. **School Environment:** The preschool should have a positive, engaging, and safe environment that encourages growth. The classroom should be spacious and well-ventilated.
4. **Communication with Parents:** The preschool should maintain regular communication with parents through meetings, emails, or phone calls. This ensures the child's progress is continually monitored.
5. **Teacher-Student Ratio:** The teacher-student ratio is essential for effective communication and learning. A lower number of students ensures better interaction and understanding.

Anganwadis: A Government Initiative for Early Childhood Care: The government of India introduced the Anganwadi program for the comprehensive development of children.

Launched in 1975 under the "Integrated Child Development Services" (ICDS) scheme, it aims to combat malnutrition and ensure maternal and child care. Anganwadis primarily cater to children aged 0-6 years. They provide nutritious meals, immunizations, and educational services. Free preschool education along with health care makes Anganwadis widely popular.

Legal Provisions: The Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 emphasizes that education is a fundamental right for children. While the Act primarily covers children from 6 to 14 years of age, it indirectly supports early childhood education as an essential part of the foundation for primary education. Moreover, the National Policy on Education (NPE) encourages preschool education for all children in India as a part of holistic development.

Conclusion: Preschool education is no longer a luxury but a necessity in today's world. It plays a pivotal role in the social, emotional, and academic development of children. As families evolve, and the environment becomes more urbanized, providing children with early education ensures they are better prepared for the challenges ahead. Whether through formal preschools or Anganwadis, it is vital that every child receives the early care and education they deserve to thrive in the future.

