

Teaching Independence

All children have natural temperaments. They can be determined, shy, outgoing or hesitant. As educators, we try to work with all these temperaments to help children feel confident in themselves. Creating opportunities for individual growth is important. Encouraging student independence, while still accepting a child's natural temperament, is an area of education we strive toward as teachers at K-Prep.

There are many areas to independence. We can be independent in physical development, academic learning, individual emotional needs, and/or social interaction. As teachers of young children, we can encourage physical independence in both large and fine motor areas. This may be through practicing putting on shoes or clothing, hanging up coats on hooks or walking and running at appropriate times.

Emotional independence can be encouraged at young ages to offer support when crying, but allowing moments to calm down without continual teacher interaction. Emotional independence is developed as students grow in their emotions, as they feel safe and confident in their surroundings and the adults in their life are also confident in their abilities to handle emotions.

Social independence is created through teaching and modeling for children how to develop friendships and solve conflicts. This is more than lecturing children on being good. Modeling social independence is often done by specifically teaching students what “using your words” looks like and what it means to be a “good friend.” Like emotional independence, children grow into their social interactions and understanding the stages of development in young children is helpful when encouraging growth.

Learning happens every day. It happens naturally, accidentally and intentionally. As educators, we want to make sure we are aware of our teaching, our intentional moments of education and our accidental words and actions that also share a message. Becoming self-aware of our own temperament, our own areas of natural independence and our personal areas of growth can help us to better educate the young children in our care.

Areas to Encourage Independence

I am...	I can...	What K-Prep does to encourage independence and growth...
3-6 months old	Roll Echo a sound Be soothed by swaddling	Talk to, snuggle and love
6-9 months old	Sit up Repeat sounds Play peek-a-boo Respond to my name Begin to eat baby food Take 2-3 regular naps	Introduce baby food (with parent approval) Talk to and play with Encourage regular naps Give opportunities to sit up
9-12 months old	Crawl Hold and drink from a sippy cup Say my first word Begin to eat solid foods Take 2 longer regular naps	Assist in moving toward toys Introduce sippy cup of water (with parent approval) Introduce solid food (with parent approval) Work to lengthen naps by patting back to sleep
12-15 months old	Walk Scribble with a crayon Respond to 'no' Enjoy books and dancing Eat all solid foods without bottles Take 1 long afternoon nap Follow a classroom schedule Use a pacifier at naptime only	Hold hands to walk Allow opportunities to do art Read to and dance with Begin to remove bottles (with parent approval) Offer 1 afternoon nap and work to lengthen
15-18 months old	Say 8+ words Follow simple one-step directions Play next to others Fill and dump with toys Stretch nap to 2 hours in length	Talk to regularly in conversation Offer toys and bins Foster play with friends Work to lengthen nap by patting back to sleep
18-24 months old	Say 2-3 word sentences Begin to run and ride toys Have temper tantrums & say "no" Try to do things on my own Feed myself with a spoon Sit at table for meal/activities	Talk to regularly in conversation Offer riding toys Allow for temper tantrums in a safe space away from group Offer spoons to eat with Allow child to try things on own
24-30 months old	Flip my coat Say please and thank you Refer to myself by name Use 20-50 words Jump, throw, and kick Stay focused on an activity when properly engaged Walk in line to go outside Begin to identify animals, shapes, colors Show interest in friends begin to potty train	Show child 'the flip' Encourage saying please and thank you Call child by name and talk to often Allow lots of physical activity Encourage staying focused on activities Keep activities fun and entertaining

30-36 months old	<p>Initiate my own play look for routines Use appropriate social behavior Potty train Dress and undress myself Drink from a cup without a lid Know my first and last name Identify animals, colors and shapes Speak so 2/3 is understandable</p>	<p>Provide routines in the classroom Model and teach appropriate social behavior Begin to potty train (with parent approval) Encourage dressing and undressing self with dress-up Repeat first and last name regularly Speak to often in conversation Teach animal names, colors and shapes regularly</p>
3+ years old	<p>Run Speak in short understandable sentences Cut and glue with little assistance Sit correctly at the table Draw and trace with little assistance Pretend play Share and cooperate with others Dress, eat and use the toilet independently Hold attention during an activity Follow multi-step directions Spell and identify letters in name Begin to identify letters and numbers Show interest in being a leader</p>	<p>Allow lots of outside time for running Speak to often in conversation Offer scissors and glue with detailed instruction and modeling Expect sitting straight at the table with feet on floor Practice drawing and tracing with assistance Offer imaginative play Allow opportunities to play/share with others Encourage dressing, eating and toileting independently Encourage staying focused on activities Keep activities fun and entertaining Practice name spelling regularly Practice letters and numbers regularly Give special 'jobs' to children</p>
4+ years old	<p>Identify numbers, letter sounds and familiar words Write letters and own name Count with 1 to 1 correspondence Complete simple puzzle Learn my birthday, address and parents names Play cooperatively with peers Clean up on own Draw and picture and explain Use imagination</p>	<p>Practice letters, sounds numbers, and reading regularly Practice spelling, reading and writing own name regularly Practice counting objects regularly Offer puzzles Introduce birthday, address and family names Offer opportunities to play/share with others Expect cleaning up after play Allow opportunities to draw</p>