

CHILD'S INTERVIEW PREPARATION GUIDE

By The Testing Mom

Children applying for private school and even some gifted programs will be invited to “interview” as part of the application process. These sessions differ from school to school. Most often, an “interview” is like a group-play date with 3 to 10 children. A few teachers will be in the room observing the children, talking to them, making notes and marking boxes on their school’s proprietary checklist. Other schools evaluate children one-on-one with a teacher or evaluator from the admissions department. While no two school interviews are alike, here are some of the kinds of things your child might be asked to do:

- **Recognize his name.** Often, nametags will have been completed in advance. Your child will be asked to find his name among all the nametags that have been laid out.
- **Greet the director.** When your child is introduced to the director of admissions or head of school, the adult may reach out to shake your child’s hand. She will note whether or not your child shakes back properly and makes eye contact when talking to her.
- **Talk to a teacher.** Someone evaluating your child will very likely strike up a conversation with her. She may be asked personal questions such as, what is your favorite activity in school? Tell me about your brothers and sisters? What was your last birthday party like? How old are you? When is your birthday? Where do you live? The teacher will take note of how personable and talkative your child is, the quality of her expressive language, and the depth and richness of her vocabulary.

- **Critical listening.** Often, during an interview, the teacher will read the children a story, then ask the children questions about what took place, why the story ended as it did, how characters felt, or how the story might relate to their life.
- **Drawing.** Often, during an interview, a child will be given crayons and asked to draw something – shapes, their family, themselves, their house. Then they will be asked to “sign” their picture. The teachers will be looking at how they hold the crayons, how much detail they put in their pictures, and how “mature” their drawing is. A drawing of a person with hands and legs sprouting out of a circle that represents the head and body is less “mature” than a drawing of a person that includes a head, body, arms, hands, legs and feet. He may be asked to draw shapes – anything from basic circles and squares to hearts or rectangles.
- **Fine Motor Skills.** Your child might be asked to string beads, cut with scissors, or fold paper the way the teacher demonstrates. During “snack” time, he may be asked to pour his own juice, get two cookies, or clean up.
- **Puzzles and blocks.** Often, kids are presented with puzzles during a visit, where she will be observed to see if she can put it together correctly. She might be given blocks and asked to reproduce a design made by the teacher, or make a block tower.
- **Counting, sorting, and patterning.** Often, teachers will ask children to count manipulatives up to a certain number or to sort them by color or category. The teacher may start a pattern and ask your child to keep it going.
- **Gross motor skills.** Since these aren’t assessed in most intelligence tests, the teacher may lead a game that requires children to hop, skip, stand on one foot, jump and demonstrate other gross motor skills that children are expected to have by the time they start school.

- **Test-like activities** – Certain schools evaluate children using activities that are similar to those on intelligence tests. So, even if your child has to take the WPPSI-III to get into one school, the person evaluating her may do activities with her that are from other tests she wasn't required to take.
- **Social skills.** Schools will be looking at how well your child interacts with other children, follows directions, listens, participates, shares, gets along with other kids – all the important skills we hope our children learn by going to preschool and being in play groups.

How to Prepare:

- Teach your child to write his name so he will recognize it when he sees it.
- Does your child know how to draw letters, numbers and shapes? To the extent possible, make sure your child can draw (and recognize!) letters, numbers and shapes. Make sure she knows her colors.
- Teach your child to introduce himself with a handshake and eye contact. Make a game out of it by pretending you're different characters like a little piggie introducing himself to the wolf! Be dramatic and make it fun.
- Encourage your child to practice her expressive language skills by telling a story back to you after you've read to her, asking her to tell you about the funniest or most exciting thing that happened to her that day, or encouraging her to play, where she will do plenty of talking to her dolls or her friends.
- When you read to your child, use the dialogic reading technique described on pages 79 – 82 of *Testing For Kindergarten*.

- Encourage your child to draw and color as much as possible. If he leaves out details in his drawings, suggest that he add them in.
- Have craft supplies at home so your child can cut with scissors, model with clay and do other things to exercise the small muscles in his hands.
- Give your child plenty of opportunity to count, from the Cheerios you give him for a snack to the number of steps it takes to walk to the corner.
- Practice sorting. Take half an egg carton and fill each indentation with small items your child can sort (buttons, coins, beads, paperclips, etc.). Mix them all together and have your child sort them into different buckets. Create patterns with the different manipulatives and see if your child can extend them. Later, create a pattern and mix it up. Can your child recreate it from memory?
- When you are at the park, play “Simon Says” or “Mother May I” and ask your child to run, jump, hop, skip, walk backwards, balance on one foot and to demonstrate other gross motor skills. See pages 111 – 112 of *Testing For Kindergarten*.
- Make sure your child has had plenty of opportunities to socialize with other children at school, during classes, at the playground and on play dates.

While this may seem like a lot, don’t let yourself get overwhelmed. If you read *Testing For Kindergarten* and are integrating the suggestions in the book into your child’s life, you are already doing exactly what you need to do to prepare her for any “interview” she might attend.