

In an article titled "When to Start Kindergarten? Suggestions for Parents" From the National Association of School Psychologists, the author states: "Although readiness is legally defined as reaching the age of five by a certain date, many parents and educators have become concerned that some kindergarten aged children seem socially or physically immature or lacking the skills to read, write and compute. When parents believe their child may struggle or fail in kindergarten, delaying entrance by one year has become a common practice, and some educators have recommended it. Over the past 20 years or so, delaying entrance to kindergarten by one year has become a common response, especially for boys who turn five within four or five months of the kindergarten cutoff date. This practice is not equally common in all schools, and its advisability depends, of course, on the individual child."

But is delaying entry into kindergarten the answer? To start school at age 5 works well for most children, but of course there are individual situations where starting kindergarten at the prescribed time can depend on the child.

According to the article, delaying entrance into kindergarten may have no advantage, or could even possibly be one factor leading to a higher drop out rate:

A review of the research on delayed entrance and on children who are the youngest within their grade indicates that:

- Delaying kindergarten until age six has not resulted in improvement in reading, writing or math skills;
- At kindergarten and first grade, youngest children do score lower on achievement tests, but the difference tends to diminish as they move through school, usually disappearing by third grade (one researcher noted that six-year-olds should look more skilled than five-year-olds in kindergarten; they have been alive 20 percent longer!);
- Delayed entrants at 4 to 12 years after entering school were no more academically skilled, athletically involved or socially successful than students who had entered kindergarten after just turning five-years-old;
- Students who are one year "too old" for a grade level are much more likely to drop out of high school.

Before delaying entrance into kindergarten, first consider meeting with the child's teacher to

discuss possible instructional modifications to meet your child's special needs and skill level. Also, you may want to ask about a formal assessment if your child has delays or learning disabilities. You may have preschool special education services that your child can benefit from. You may also wish to speak to other parents who have gone through a similar dilemma with one of their children. Ask them and see what they have to say about how things worked out for them.

Of course every child is different, and there may be situations where a child may benefit from starting a year later. As your child's first and most important teacher, you will need to assess the situation weighing your child's temperament, maturity, and skill level. If you do decide to start a year later, be sure to do plenty of kindergarten readiness activities - at least one daily - with your child to get him ready for the next school year! You can find kindergarten readiness activities here on our website by clicking the 'Activities' link on the menu bar at the top of this page.