

Parents' Checklist

A child may approach his or her first time in the nursery with eagerness or fear, smiles or tears. Parents can do much to make their child's nursery experience enjoyable by preparing the child in advance. When children know where they are going and what to expect, they are usually eager to attend. Those who come with little or no advance explanation may be afraid and may resist staying. Prepare your child to come to the nursery by doing as many of these things as possible:

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| _____ 1. Teach your child about the nursery at least two weeks before he or she will first attend. | _____ 10. Arrive at the nursery promptly. |
| _____ 2. Arrange for your child to meet the nursery teachers a week or two before the first time he or she will attend the nursery. | _____ 11. Reassure your child that you will come back later. Promptly return to pick up your child at the end of nursery. |
| _____ 3. Arrange for your child to meet a few of the other nursery children. | _____ 12. If your child is afraid, remain in the nursery with him or her for the first few times. |
| _____ 4. During the week before your child enters the nursery, say positive things about the nursery. | _____ 13. Tell the nursery teachers which classes you will be attending during nursery time so they can bring your child to you if there is a problem. |
| _____ 5. Take your child to see the nursery room when no one else is there. | _____ 14. Inform the nursery teachers if your child has an unusual problem, such as a food allergy. |
| _____ 6. The day before, remind your child that nursery will start tomorrow. | _____ 15. Talk over the nursery experience with your child in a positive, warm way. Be sure to say good things about your child's nursery class and teachers. |
| _____ 7. On the first day of nursery, allow plenty of time for your child to get ready for church. Do not rush. | _____ 16. Remember that love and patience will make the nursery a good experience for your child. |
| _____ 8. Leave all your child's toys at home. | |
| _____ 9. Take care of your child's rest room and feeding needs before taking him or her to the nursery. A child who needs a diaper change will be taken to a parent. | |

Please do not take your child to the nursery when he or she has any of the following symptoms:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fever• Runny nose• Cough• Unusual irritability or crossness• Vomiting• Diarrhea• Rash• Eye discharge• Head lice• An illness or infection treated with antibiotics within the last 48 hours | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An obvious childhood illness in the contagious period:<ul style="list-style-type: none">chicken pox (seven days)measles (until rash disappears)scarlet fever (until rash disappears)mumps (until swelling is gone, usually seven days)impetigo |
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If your child has an allergy that is causing a runny nose, cough, or rash, please let the nursery teachers know that your child's symptoms are not contagious.

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Studying the following characteristics of young children can help you better understand why the children in your class behave the way they do. Use this knowledge in preparing and teaching the lessons and in interacting with the children. Remember that these are general guidelines; children do not all develop at the same rate or behave the same way at the same age. For more information on the characteristics of children, see *Teaching, No Greater Call* (110–11).

Mental Characteristics of a Young Child

- Thinks simply and literally. Does not understand abstract ideas.
- Has a short attention span (one to three minutes).
- Often asks questions or makes comments that are off the subject.
- Is very curious and inquisitive.
- Is generally excited to learn and try new things.
- Enjoys repetition.
- Can make simple choices.

Physical Characteristics of a Young Child

- Is generally very active.
- Is developing the abilities to march, jump, and clap.
- Becomes restless, irritable, and tired easily.
- Finds it easier to undo and take down than to put back.

Social Characteristics of a Young Child

- Is trusting.
- Generally enjoys playing alone.
- Is often quite selfish and self-centered.
- Has difficulty sharing and taking turns.
- Often argues over toys.

Emotional Characteristics of a Young Child

- Is usually anxious to love and be loved.
- Has frequent emotional outbursts.
- Often cries easily.
- Moves between moods frequently.

Spiritual Characteristics of a Young Child

- Likes to pray but will need help to do so.
- Can begin learning the meaning of reverence.
- Is sensitive to the Spirit.
- Understands that Heavenly Father and Jesus love us.
- Understands basic spiritual concepts.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS IN THE NURSERY

Even in the best nursery, children occasionally misbehave. The following are some common behavior problems and suggestions for resolving them.

Problem

A parent tells you the child does not want to come to the nursery. The child screams and cries when the parent tries to leave.

A child seems afraid of you or the other children, wanders aimlessly around the nursery, and will not talk to anyone.

During the entire nursery period, a child clings to your leg or tries to sit on your lap.

During lesson time, several children stand up and walk away before the activities are finished.

A child will not sit quietly and listen. He or she pushes and pulls at the children sitting nearby.

Several children start fighting over a toy. One child kicks, hits, or bites in order to keep the toy.

A child starts to play roughly—swinging a toy around, pounding it, or throwing it. Then he or she runs to another part of the room.

A child takes one toy after another from the shelf, refusing to put any of the toys away.

A child begins to whine and cry. When you try to give comfort, he or she says, “I don’t like you,” and pulls away.

A child asks, “When will my mother come? When can I go home?”

Possible Solution

Encourage parents to prepare their children for the nursery ahead of time (see “Preparing Children for the Nursery,” pages x–xi). Invite the parent to stay until the child is calm and settled. It might be helpful to invite other adults to hold crying children to help them feel more secure.

Be patient; do not pressure the child. Give him or her time to get to know you, the other children, and the environment. Occasionally reassure the child and suggest one or two activities to try. Help the child have a successful experience of some kind.

Young children need warmth and attention. A minute of holding and talking to the child periodically will usually satisfy him or her. Then encourage the child to become involved in the nursery activities.

Be alert and aware of each child’s needs, interests, and attention span. Look for signs of boredom or restlessness so you can adjust the activity to fit the children’s interests. Do not force a child to participate in any activity. If some children want to return to playing with toys, let them do so.

The second teacher can direct the child’s attention to the activity the first teacher is conducting. Give the child something to hold so he or she is actively involved in the lesson or activity.

Children can sometimes resolve disagreements themselves, but you should step in if necessary to prevent them from hurting each other or damaging property. You might suggest ways for the children to solve their problem.

You need to stop this behavior. Explain to the child why he or she cannot act this way; then direct the child to another activity.

Gently but firmly restate the expected behavior. Show the child how to put the toys away. Encourage the child to put each toy away before taking another one.

Young children are usually easily distracted. Show the child a special toy and suggest that it might be fun to play with. If that does not work, try a story or book. Wiping the child’s eyes sometimes helps stop the crying. If the child continues to cry, take him or her to a parent.

Reassure the child that his or her parents will come back. Talk about some of the things that will take place before it is time to go home.

ACTIVITIES AND GAMES FOR THE NURSERY

Use the activities in this section at your discretion during nursery playtime or activity time. You may also use any activities in this section that correspond to a particular lesson during nursery lesson time, and activities from the lesson may also be used during playtime. Make activities available to the children during playtime, but do not require the children to participate. Some children may prefer to play with toys during the entire playtime.

Art Activities

Experiences with art can be enjoyable and can help children develop self-confidence, creativity, manual dexterity, eye-hand coordination, and awareness of their senses. Art can also be a very satisfying way of expressing individuality. Use your imagination and creativity in planning appropriate art projects for your class.

These guidelines may help you plan creative art projects:

- Keep projects simple.
- Be prepared. Have all necessary materials and know how to do the project yourself.
- Be flexible. If you are flexible, you will not be upset when a project does not go as planned. Remember that children are often more interested in experimenting with the materials you give them than in finishing a project.
- Be positive and interested in what the children are doing, and give sincere praise.
- Use variety. Plan projects that let the children use a wide variety of materials and methods from week to week.
- Be tactful. Young children do not always try to represent something with their art. They simply enjoy experimenting with the materials provided. If you want to comment on a child's work, say, "Tell me about your picture" instead of asking, "What is it?"
- Give minimal help. Help when necessary but allow the children to do their own work.

Coloring to Music

Materials needed: Recorded music or instruments, paper, and crayons or colored pencils.

Play music as the children color. Have them color the way the music makes them feel.

Collage

A collage is a picture made by gluing together pieces of paper, photographs, or other materials.

Materials needed: Almost any material can be used in a collage, such as gift wrapping paper, tissue paper, wallpaper samples, leaves, sand, and macaroni products. You will need glue or paste and a piece of paper or some other object with a flat surface (to act as the base of the collage) for each child.

Let the children choose materials to paste on the base of the collage. Let them create whatever designs they want.

Stringing Macaroni

Materials needed: Large uncooked macaroni (or pieces of straw or any other material that would be easy to string), a large piece of string or yarn for each child, and glue or wax.

Make one end of each piece of string or yarn stiff by dipping it in glue or wax. After it is dry, it will be stiff enough to allow stringing. Tie a knot in the other end of the string so the macaroni won't slip off. Let the children string the macaroni, and then tie the ends of each string together when the children are finished.

Simple Play Dough

Materials needed:

2 cups flour
1 cup salt
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
3/4 cup water
food coloring (optional)

Combine flour and salt. Add oil and enough water for a clay-like consistency. Add water a little at a time until the mixture is pliable but not too sticky. Mix and knead slightly. (To color the play dough, add food coloring to the water before adding to the flour and salt.)

Make the play dough at home before you want to use it in the nursery, and store it in an airtight container, if possible. Bring paper (waxed paper works especially well) to spread on the tables where the children will be using the play dough.

Games and Activity Verses

Children love to do things that involve movement, such as simple games or actions to verses or songs. Many activity verses are included in the lessons, and some simple games are described below. When children enjoy an activity, it can be used many times throughout the year, not just in the lessons where it is mentioned.

These guidelines can help you teach new activity verses to children:

- Memorize the activity verse yourself before class.
- Say the words and do the actions for the children first, exaggerating the action. Then invite the children to join you.
- Go slowly so the children will understand the words and actions.
- Use visual aids occasionally to help present the activity verse. Children pay attention and learn better if they have something to look at.
- Shorten the activity verse if the children become restless. If an activity verse is long, you may want to help the children do the actions while you say the words alone.

Reverence Verses

Use the following verses when the children are restless and need some help becoming reverent. Using one of them at the same time every week could help the children know when it is time for the opening or closing prayer. Help the children say the words and improvise actions as suggested by the words.

Open, Shut Them [Hands]

Open, shut them;
Open, shut them;
Give a little clap.
Open, shut them;
Open, shut them;
Lay them in your lap.

I Shake My Hands

I shake my hands.
I roll my hands.
I give my hands a clap.
I raise my hands,
Then bring them down
And fold them in my lap.

I hush my feet.
I rest my feet.
I sit straight in my chair.
I bow my head.
I close my eyes.
I'm ready for the prayer.

Sometimes I'm Tall, and Sometimes I'm Small

Use the following bend-and-stretch verse when the children have been sitting and need to move around. Repeat as desired.

Sometimes I'm tall—very, very tall (stand up, then on tiptoe).

Sometimes I'm small—very, very small (stoop down, then way down).

Sometimes tall, sometimes small (stand up, then stoop down).

What am I now? (stand up or stoop down; let the children say if they are tall or small).

The Little Seed

Tell the children how seeds are planted in the ground, and help them pretend to be growing seeds. Say, "Let's pretend we are little seeds" (crouch down or curl into a ball, and close eyes). "The sun came out and made the seeds warm. Then the rain poured down and said, 'Wake up, little seeds'" (open eyes and start to stretch). "Get up out of the ground, little seeds, so you can grow" (stand up and stretch arms above head). "Little seeds, you have grown into beautiful flowers [or tall trees]."

Let's Go to Grandma's [or Grandpa's] House

Say, "Let's pretend to go to Grandma's [or Grandpa's] house. First we must put on our coats [or get dressed]" (act out putting on a coat or getting dressed). "Let's get in the car [or on the bus]" (act out opening the door and riding). "Oh, this road is bumpy" (make the motions of going over bumps). "Look, let's wave to the police officer" (make waving motions). "We're almost there. Here comes Grandma [or Grandpa] now. Let's give her [or him] a great big hug" (act out giving Grandma or Grandpa a hug).

Helping Our Parents

Direct the children in doing actions that represent helping their parents. You might say, "Let's pretend to help sweep the floor." The children act out sweeping the floor. You could continue with making beds, washing windows, dusting, raking leaves, digging in the garden, washing the car, or other activities appropriate to your area.

Rolling Ball Game

Materials needed: A ball.

The children sit in a semicircle. You sit in front of them and roll the ball to a child, saying that child's name or asking a question related to the lesson. The child rolls the ball back to you and says your name or answers the question. Make sure you give every child at least one turn. You can also play this game standing, handing the ball back and forth.

Matching Shapes

Materials needed: Colored paper, scissors.

Use colored paper to make one large cutout and one small cutout of each of the following shapes: square, circle, triangle, heart, octagon, and oval. Spread the shapes on the floor. Each child takes a turn placing a small shape on top of the matching larger shape. For variation, make the same shapes on different colors of paper, and have the children match by color instead of by shape.

Musical Shapes

Materials needed: Different colored circles cut from colored paper or fabric, recorded music or instruments, tape (optional).

Tape or place the circles on the floor in a large circle. Have the children walk around the outside of the large circle as music is played. When the music stops, each child names the color of the circle he or she is standing by. For variation, use different shapes and have the children name the color and the shape.

Beanbag Toss

Materials needed: Beanbags; a box, basket, or target (made by cutting holes in a poster picture mounted on stiff material).

Have the children throw beanbags into the box, basket, or target. (You could make the beanbags or target to match a holiday or lesson.) The children could also throw beanbags at blocks or boxes that have been stacked on top of each other.

Statues

Materials needed: Recorded music or instruments.

Have the children move around the room while music plays. When the music stops, the children stand perfectly still like statues. The children may move again when the music starts, but they must stand still whenever it stops.

MUSIC IN THE NURSERY CLASSROOM

Music in the nursery classroom creates a warm and loving atmosphere, making Primary a happy place to be. Nursery-age children are ready and eager to learn about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, themselves, and this beautiful world. An important way for them to learn is through music. Children can enjoy music in many different ways. They can sing, play instruments, move to music, and listen to music. See “Music in the Classroom,” page vii, for additional comments on using music to teach young children.

Singing

Young children may not want to sing with you (very young children may be unable to sing with you), but they enjoy listening to you sing and often learn important principles through songs. Encourage the children to sing, but do not worry if they do not. Children who cannot sing with you may enjoy doing simple actions while you sing.

You may want to use the same songs each week as you begin each different activity. When the children hear the familiar melody, they will know what activity is starting. You could also change the words to a song to fit the children's situations or activities. Sing the children's favorite songs many times throughout the year.

The following songs from the *Children's Songbook* are especially appropriate for use in the nursery. Included are some suggestions for ways you may adapt the words. You may have other ideas for ways to adapt these or other songs in the *Children's Songbook* so they will be appropriate for the nursery.

- “A Happy Family” (p. 198) (© 1975 Pioneer Music Press, Inc.). Create a verse about your happy nursery or Primary. Use as a greeting: “I see Susie; she sees me. . . .”
- “Do As I'm Doing” (p. 276). Use for giving direction: “Cleaning up the nursery; follow, follow me! . . .” or “Gather for singing. . . .”
- “Fun to Do” (p. 253)
- “Here We Are Together” (p. 261)
- “I Wiggle” (p. 271)
- “If You're Happy” (p. 266)
- “My Hands” (p. 273)
- “Once There Was a Snowman” (p. 249) (© 1981 Pioneer Music Press, Inc.). Create verses about other things in nature: “Once there was a green tree . . . tall, tall, tall. In its shade I rested, . . . small, small, small.”
- “Rain Is Falling All Around” (p. 241)
- “Singing a Song” (p. 253). Replace “sing” with basic movements: “Jump, jump, jump” or “Hop, hop, hop.” Sing about clothing, colors, or self: “Shoes, shoes, shoes; I like my shoes. I wear them on my feet; shoes, shoes, shoes!”
- “Smiles” (p. 267)
- “Popcorn Popping” (p. 242)

Musical Instruments

Obtain simple musical instruments for the children to play, or make your own.

Flute or horn: Punch a few holes in the side of a cardboard tube (such as the kind used for wrapping paper, waxed paper, or paper towels). For a special effect, tape cellophane over one end. To play, hum or sing into the tube.

Sand blocks: Cut two pieces of 1"-thick wood about 2" wide by 4" long. Cut two smaller pieces, about 1" by 2 1/2". Sand any sharp edges or splinters off the blocks. Center the smaller blocks on the larger ones and nail securely. Attach a piece of sandpaper to the bottom of each block. To play, knock the sand blocks together or scrape the pieces of sandpaper against each other.

Shakers: Put corn kernels or dried beans in a metal can with no sharp edges, or in a cardboard container. Have the children decorate the containers. Tape openings securely to prevent the children from eating or playing with the contents. To play, shake.

Bells: Sew bells onto a strip of fabric. To play, shake.

Movement to Music

Creative movement to music helps children use energy constructively and develops their abilities to use their minds creatively. Sing, play a piano or other instrument, or use recorded music for the children to move to.

To involve children in movement to music, you could:

- Direct the children in running, jumping, bending, whirling, tiptoeing, crawling, leaping, or stretching to music. Let the children take turns leading the group's actions.
- Play or sing songs with different tempos and let the children run or walk as the music suggests.
- Have the children wave colored scarves or paper streamers as they move to music.
- Use action songs when the children need a change of pace. If the children have been sitting for a long time, an action song using the large muscles and large movements would be appropriate. If they have been moving and need to be calmed, an action song using the small muscles as the children sit might be effective.

Listening

This manual is accompanied by an audiocassette that can be used for listening activities. The audiocassette contains five sections:

1. "Quiet Music"—to be played as the children enter the nursery or at other times when a peaceful atmosphere is desired.
2. "Musical Awareness"—to help the children become aware of various musical characteristics.
3. "Moving to Music"—to be played for the children as they do actions such as bending or stretching. The children can release energy and develop physical and rhythmic skills as they listen and participate.
4. "Musical Expression"—to encourage the children to listen and move freely to music. Twelve short selections are included, with narration that suggests ways to move to the music. Use no more than three selections in a class period.
5. "Pretend Stories"—to be played to provide activity for the children. By following the directions and listening carefully to the stories, children take part in pantomime and other physical activities. The stories are titled "A Walk in the Forest," "A Visit to the Zoo," and "The Toys in the Toy Box." Use only one story in a class period.

You may also use the *Children's Songbook* audiocassettes (music only, 52505; music and words, 52428) or compact discs (music only, 50505; music and words, 50428), if available.

Children may have a hard time concentrating on music if they are only listening. Combine listening with singing, moving, or other activities, as in the following examples:

- Have the children lie on the floor and listen to different kinds of music. Talk about how the music makes them feel. Then have them demonstrate how they feel.
- Play marching music and let the children march around the room.
- Have the children clap the rhythms of the music they are listening to.

SAMPLE ADAPTED LESSONS

Following are examples of how two lessons in this manual could be adapted for use in the nursery. As you review the samples, notice that:

Each block of time in the lesson is focused on a simple gospel message. Activities and music should help the children begin to understand basic gospel principles and terms.

Only some parts from the original lesson have been selected. This helps keep the class simple, active, and appropriate for nursery-age children.

The activities selected are not always used in the same order that they appear in in the original lesson. Activities during the lesson should be arranged in the order that will best help nursery-age children understand the gospel message.

Lesson 6: Heavenly Father and Jesus Love Me

Welcome

One way to set a reverent atmosphere for the nursery is to play music from the *Children's Songbook* audiocassettes. To introduce the gospel message in this lesson, you could give each child a badge that says "Heavenly Father and Jesus Love Me" (see enrichment activity 6, page 17).

Playtime

35 minutes

During playtime, find ways to help the children think about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. For example, you might teach the children that Heavenly Father and Jesus are happy when we are kind to each other and that they love us very much. You could also help the children remember last week's lesson by asking them, "Who is Heavenly Father's Son?"

Gathering Time

10 minutes

Gathering time can also be used to prepare the children for the lesson. Start by singing a prayer song and help a child pray. Then help the children prepare for the lesson by asking them who gave us this beautiful earth and the gospel and the Church (see attention activity, page 15).

Music Time

10 minutes

Music can be very effective in helping nursery-age children learn a gospel message. For example, in this lesson you could help the children think about Heavenly Father and Jesus by singing "I Know My Father Lives" or "I Feel My Savior's Love" (see enrichment activity 2, page 17). As time permits, review songs from previous lessons or sing selected songs listed on page xvii.

Snack Time

10 minutes

Although no activity is used here to reinforce the gospel message, you can remind the children that Heavenly Father and Jesus love us and that we should thank them for everything, including our food. Then invite a child to give a blessing on the food.

Lesson Time

10 minutes

This lesson has several parts that could be used to help nursery-age children understand that Heavenly Father and Jesus love them. For example, you could use the following parts from lesson 6:

- Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ give us blessings (pp. 15–16)
- Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love each of us (p. 16)
- Additional activity 2 (p. 17)
- Enrichment activity 1 (p. 17)

<i>Activity Time</i>	15 minutes	Activity time gives the children opportunities to be creative and to channel their energy. Where possible, activities should help reinforce the gospel message. For example, you could play the rolling ball game (p. xvi), asking questions to reinforce the gospel message.
<i>Closing Time</i>	10 minutes	Use closing time to remind the children that Heavenly Father and Jesus love each of them and know them by name. Share your feelings of gratitude for the blessings Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have given you. Then help a child offer a closing prayer.
Lesson 10: I Am Thankful for Trees, Plants, and Flowers		
<i>Welcome</i>		Greet each child by name as they enter the nursery. As you greet them, introduce the theme of the lesson by telling them that today they will learn about plants, flowers, and trees.
<i>Playtime</i>	35 minutes	During playtime, prepare the children for the lesson by telling them about the many beautiful things in this world that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have created for us to enjoy.
<i>Gathering Time</i>	10 minutes	Sing a prayer song; then help a child pray. For this lesson, you might also bring a plant for the children to see, feel, and smell. Then express your gratitude for plants, flowers, and trees (see additional activity 2, page 30).
<i>Music Time</i>	10 minutes	Sing “In the Leafy Treetops” (see additional activity 4, page 30). Doing the actions to the song will help create a happy environment and give the children a change of pace. As time permits, you might also review songs from previous lessons.
<i>Snack Time</i>	10 minutes	When possible, begin snack time with a simple activity that relates to the gospel message. For example, in this lesson the snack could consist of bread and fruit. Explain to the children that these things come from trees, plants, and flowers (see the activity on page 29). Then help a child give a blessing on the food.
<i>Lesson Time</i>	10 minutes	Select parts from the lesson that you feel will help the children understand the gospel message. For example, you could help the children understand how trees, plants, and flowers grow by cutting open a piece of fruit so the children can see the seeds. Explain what must happen for the seeds to grow and become more fruit (see enrichment activity 4, page 30). Then help the children plant seeds in paper cups full of soil (see enrichment activity 1, page 29).
<i>Activity Time</i>	15 minutes	Following the lesson, you could play soft music while the children color pictures of trees, plants, and flowers. Activities could be selected from the lesson or from those listed on pages xiv–xvii. Some children may prefer to play with toys during this time. Make activities available, but don’t require the children to participate.
<i>Closing Time</i>	10 minutes	Closing time is used to summarize the gospel message and help prepare the children for prayer. In this lesson, you could have the children repeat after you the words to the song “Little Seeds Lie Fast Asleep” to remind the children that we are thankful for trees, plants, and flowers (see enrichment activity 2, page 29). Then help a child offer a closing prayer.