



## Parents' Guide

### About Cupcake Digital Apps

Cupcake Digital apps are designed to encourage your child's learning and growth development as they prepare to enter kindergarten. Your child can read, play, and learn with Cupcake Digital's fun and educational apps! Every app includes a Grown-Up's Corner to encourage discussion and a Common Core Corner to explain how each app meets specific standards and skills required for school. We encourage you to extend your child's experience by downloading Common Core State Standard related activities to do at home.

Cupcake Digital values education. It is our goal to create engaging apps that foster learning on and offline. Cupcake Digital's apps are vetted by educators to ensure that the apps focus is on building academic skills teachers expect children to have. This parents' guide will lead you through our apps and provide ideas for offline activities to aid in your child's preparation for kindergarten.

### Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Developing the skills to be ready for school takes time. Cupcake Digital's apps can help enrich the quality of the time your child spends with technology. Each enhanced story app is equipped with open-ended conversation starters, educational, age-appropriate games, and downloadable activities to enrich the learning experience.

In addition to using the wonderful digital technology available today, interaction with others is still the key to having a well-rounded child. Children need extensive practice to gain critical life skills, as well as an understanding of the world around them. Practice can take many forms, from independent play with our apps to structured or unstructured experiences offline.

### Reading

Teachers encourage parents to foster early literacy at home by reading with your child every day. Reading just 20 minutes a day, as recommended by experts, builds essential vocabulary, an appreciation for the rhythm and power of language, and exposes early learners to new people, places, and things.

Cupcake Digital's story apps are developed with three unique ways to practice reading. Each mode is designed with a different level of reading support:

- *Just A Book* is designed for you and your child to enjoy reading a book together
- *Read to Me* is for your child to listen to a story independently. As the narrator models good reading, children learn what fluent reading sounds like. In this mode, words are highlighted to teach young children directionality (that text moves from left to right and top to bottom) and one-to-one correspondence (that each word is one written word).



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- *Read and Play* is designed for children to read independently. Children can tap on unknown words for narrator assistance. If your child has heard a story multiple times, give this mode a try.

After reading any book, start a discussion with your child. In every Cupcake Digital app, we included a Grown-Up's Corner. Our questions are open-ended to prompt meaningful conversation about the story and encourage critical thinking. After sharing a book with your child, use these sample questions to get a conversation going:

- What did you like about this story?
- Who is your favorite character in this story? Why?
- How do the pictures help you figure out what is going on in the book?
- What does this book remind you of?

Nonfiction titles support kids' natural curiosity about the world around them. Here are some sample questions to initiate a conversation:

- What did you learn about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Choose a picture in the book. What does this teach/show us?
- How are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ alike? How are they different?
- Describe the different kinds of \_\_\_\_\_ you have seen.

[Greatschools.org](https://www.greatschools.org) suggests both fiction and non-fiction titles that tap into a child's many interests.

Nursery rhymes, poetry and other silly books are extra fun for children to hear read aloud:

- Read books with rhythm. Rhyming books, poems, and songs are special because of the rhythm required to read them, making it engaging for kids and adults
- A great activity is to rhyme words from books with your child- real or invented!
  - Cat, sat, hat, mat. What words sound like that?
  - Wubbzy, lubbzy, crubbzy, dubbzy

Children often have a favorite book. Reading the same books over and over is a great learning exercise for children to predict and even retell a story. Ask your child why that special book is their favorite. Your local library is a great place to find new books to read with your child.

## Writing

Teachers encourage parents to work with their children on letters, writing their name, and how to hold a pencil correctly. Doodling and drawing are great ways to develop the muscles that will lead to writing, so encourage practicing holding pencils, crayons and markers correctly.



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Cupcake Digital's apps have a variety of games to encourage writing, including letter and word-tracing activities. Cupcake Digital also offers many downloadable worksheets on their website, [Cupcakedigital.com](http://Cupcakedigital.com). Many are designed to develop writing skills.

Here are some other ways you can help your child develop into a writer:

- Practice writing letters (in the sand, with water and a paintbrush on a sidewalk)
- Practice writing your child's name (capitalizing only the first letter)
- Write and name letters in shaving cream while taking a bath
- Use magnetic letters on the fridge to learn letters
- Hunt for letters while in the car/doctor's office, etc. (Can you find the letter A?)

Encourage proper letter formation. It's important to practice as children develop muscle memory that will last a lifetime. Here is a [helpful guide](#).

## Math

Teachers encourage parents to practice counting with their child before entering kindergarten. [Counting](#) is complicated for young children, requiring cognitive skills and number memorization. It requires an understanding of many components, including the following, to understand numbers and counting:

- Each number represents a quantity: Five beans = 5
- Each number said (1, 2, 3...) goes with one and only one quantity of objects: Move and line up the quantity of beans as you count them
- Knowing the last number said is the quantity: count 1, 2, 3,, 4. How many are there? There are four
- Knowing the number of objects doesn't change regardless of arrangement: five beans in a line = 5. Five beans in a pile still equal 5.
- Knowing that the size of the objects doesn't change the quantity: six big elephants or six little flowers, the quantity is still the same.

Cupcake Digital apps have a variety of games that encourage the understanding of numbers and counting. These games provide many opportunities for children to move and arrange objects, match quantities to numbers, and see them in a number line as they practice counting. You can also download practice worksheets from their website.

Here are some practical ways your child can practice counting:

- How many plates do we need to set the table?
- How many magnets do you see on our refrigerator?
- Bring me three potatoes.
- Which two snacks would you like to take to the park today?
- Which four stuffed animals are you going to pack for this trip?



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- How many shoes are in the closet?

Cupcake Digital's games and worksheets encourage the development of other important math concepts such as geometry and measurement.

Here are some other ways your child can experience these concepts:

- Play with cups and containers of various sizes in the bathtub. Pour from one cup into another to demonstrate how the quantity of water in a cup of one size fits or doesn't fit into a cup of another size
- Explore: Are there more pigeons or ducks at the park today?
- Which dog/book/car/building is bigger/smaller/shorter/taller/closer/farther?
- Clap out patterns/repeating beats (clap, clap, touch my knees, clap, clap, touch my knees)
- Look for shapes and name them (circle, square, rectangle, etc.)

## Socialization

Teachers expect children to come to kindergarten knowing how to:

- Get along with others
- Take turns playing and talking
- Sit still and listen
- Speak for themselves
- Use manners with adults and peers
- Work independently and with others
- Walk in a line and to follow directions

Here are some easy ways families can give children opportunities to develop these important skills.

- Go to story time at a local bookstore or library and learn to be quiet during reading time
- Play with other children at the park and learn to share, cooperate, and be friendly
- Join teams or clubs where interaction with peers is necessary
- Have your child order his/her own food at a restaurant
- Encourage your child to do as much independently as possible (choose his own clothes, put on shoes without assistance, serve his own plate of food, brush her teeth on her own, etc.)
- See a play to practice being respectful of the performers, sitting still, and following along
- Take turns talking by asking and answering questions, and teach your child to be patient and not interrupt
- Play follow-the-leader: Everyone gets a turn being the leader and a follower
- Play board games and learn to be a good winner and loser
- Enjoy games like Simon Says and Ring-Around-the-Rosie and Red Light, Green Light. [Wired.com](http://Wired.com) has a list of 30 outdoor fun games, many require little or no equipment.



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## Experiences

Teachers expect students to come to school with a variety of experiences to enhance their classroom learning. Here are some ideas for activities that give children a great foundation:

- Go fishing
- Take a camping trip
- Play in the snow or rain
- Go to the ocean and get wet and sandy
- Play with mud and get dirty!
- Ride in an elevator/on an escalator
- Visit the zoo/petting zoo
- Visit science/children's museum. [Find one near you here.](#)
- Make shadows with flashlights
- Take a bus, taxi or train
- Play with a cardboard box
- Have a water fight
- Swim in a pool, lake or river
- Blow bubbles
- Do household tasks such as laundry, raking leaves, sorting recyclable items, taking out the garbage, etc.
- Make and play home-made instruments
- Go to the grocery store and let your child help you pay
- Dance!
- Sing songs
- Climb a tree
- Build a fort in your home with blankets, chairs, pillows, etc.
- Build a fairy house out of recycled materials
- Camp out in the backyard/living room

The opportunities are endless! Be creative and open to your child's input on things you do together. What is your child's passion? Dinosaurs, fairies, cars, or horses? Follow those leads and explore! [Grandparents.com](#) has some simple hand games to enjoy with your little one too:

Cupcake Digital is proud to support families and they prepare their children for the rigors of school. Cupcake Digital understands that young children have a variety of needs. Each app and offline activity is designed to meet a wide range of learning styles and abilities. Cupcake Digital regularly designs new and exciting titles in addition to developing offline content for young learners. Check [Cupcakedigital.com](#) often and look out for Cupcake Digital's latest apps on iTunes, Amazon, Google Play, and Barnes & Noble.



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This guide was created in partnership with veteran educators and parents, Cristina Kaviani-Johnson, M.A., Jennifer Denham, M.A., and Ramona Conn.