

# Starting Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

## What is a kindergarten program?

Kindergarten (also known as kinder) is an early education and care program for young children aged three to five, led by an early childhood teacher. Funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten has been introduced across Victoria, which means families can access two years of funded kindergarten.

## How will my child benefit from kindergarten?

Kindergarten helps your child to learn and grow. Research shows that quality kindergarten programs support children to thrive throughout their lives.

This includes supporting them to develop positive relationships, problem-solving skills, ways to manage their emotions, and approaches to exploring, discovering and learning about themselves and the world around them.

Children who attend kindergarten programs are generally more independent and confident and are more likely to make a smooth transition to primary school.

**Evidence shows that two years are better than one when it comes to early learning.**

Taking part in a quality kindergarten program from three years old leads to positive effects on a child's learning and development. It has even greater benefits for children who need extra support or are experiencing vulnerable circumstances.

## When can my child start kindergarten?

Children can attend kindergarten programs in the two years before they start primary school.

Families with children born between January and April can choose which year to start at Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. These children can start in the same year they turn three, or in the year they turn four years of age. Due to staff requirements, some services may ask that children start attending at kindergarten only after their third birthday. This may mean that some children may not start until part-way into Term 1, and have less time overall as part of a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program, in comparison to their peers.

If this is the case for your child and you accept a place, kindergartens will hold your child's place until they are old enough and only charge you fees for the weeks your child attends.

Kindergarten services will discuss with you directly about how they can support your child to join their program once they turn three.

When your child starts at kindergarten directly relates to the age they will start at primary school. When enrolling at Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, we encourage families to plan ahead and consider the age they would like their child to start at primary school.

If your child was born between	Your child is eligible to attend Three-Year-Old Kinder in:
1 May 2017 – 31 December 2017	2021
1 Jan 2018 – 30 April 2018	2021 or 2022
1 May 2018 – 31 December 2018	2022
1 Jan 2019 – 30 April 2019	2022 or 2023
1 May 2019 – 31 December 2019	2023
1 January 2020 – 30 April 2020	2023 or 2024
1 May 2020 – 31 December 2020	2024

# 1

Use the calculator on [vic.gov.au/kinder](https://vic.gov.au/kinder) and enter your child's birthdate to find out what year your child can start Three-Year-Old Kinder.

# 2

Refer to the **Selecting a kindergarten service for your child** factsheet. Children can attend a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program at either a long day care (childcare) centre or at a standalone (sessional) kindergarten.



## Where can I get advice on the best time to start kindergarten?

Each child learns differently.

They have unique learning and developmental needs and interests; for example, children might become toilet trained, learn how to draw and hold a pencil, develop different communication skills, or deal with strong emotions, like frustration or anger, at a range of different ages.

In partnership with you, teachers and educators will provide education and care programs to suit your child's individual learning and development.

In some cases, your child may benefit from starting a kindergarten program later. You know your child best, and there are steps you can take if you are unsure about the best time for your child to start a kindergarten program. Consider seeking advice from trusted early childhood professionals by:

- attending kindergarten information sessions or open days at your local services and talking with early childhood teachers or educators
- speaking to your child's current educators. If your child attends a long day care program, their educators will be regularly assessing their learning and development needs
- talking with your child's Maternal and Child Health nurse, family doctor and any other professionals your child sees (for example, speech therapist, physiotherapist or paediatrician).

These conversations will help you make an informed decision about when to start your child at kindergarten. If you feel that your child may benefit from being older when starting school (that is, five years old turning six during their Foundation year), then consider starting your child at Three-Year-Old Kindergarten later.

## Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is for all children

Kindergarten programs are for all children.

If your child has a disability or learning difficulty, the educators will talk with you about how the program and environment can support your child.

If you need support to enrol your child in a kindergarten program or to find a program that suits your family, talk to your local services or contact your local council.

## Can my child go to a second year of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten?

Children's learning and development does not follow a straight line – each child learns differently throughout their early years. This means deciding when your child should start school is a decision that is best made when your child is closer to school age. For this reason, there won't be a second year of funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten available.

All children in a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program will move onto Four-Year-Old Kindergarten the following year. A second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will be considered when a child shows delays in key areas of learning and development.

