

Successful Preschool Drop-offs

by Sandra Blackard, founder of Language of Listening®



How to make preschool drop-offs easier? **Follow your child's eyes.**

When you first step in the room, check to see where your child is looking. The joining in process for reluctant children goes like this: hiding, peeking, looking, leaning, talking, stepping, joining and forgetting you are there!

Simple rule: The eyes go first; the body follows.

Your ability to see the progression will give you confidence that will put your child at ease.

At the start, some children won't look up at all and bury their faces in your shoulder, skirt or pants leg. Be patient. Chat casually with the other parents or the staff without drawing attention to the child. After a moment, if the child is still hiding, start describing the room or what the other children are doing as though you are just talking to yourself. Without pressure to look up or join in, your child will eventually peek.

Don't try to hand your child over to the teacher just yet. A rushed child is likely to escalate to cries or screams because you missed the message, "I'm not ready to be here." Wait.

When your child starts looking at the room, switch from saying what you see to saying what your child sees, as in, "You're looking at those kids," or "You see that toy," etc. After a moment or two take a step in the direction of your child's gaze and see how he or she responds. If your child pulls you back, follow, wait, and describe some more. Let the child choose where to stand or sit by saying, "You want me to move. We can watch from here or over there." If the child is particularly cautious, you can suggest watching from a distant corner. Pointing out the strength, "You like to watch first. You know when you are ready," will help your child even more. When your child begins talking about what he or she sees, you know you are almost there.

This dance goes faster than you think because children in the lead actually begin to lead...very quickly. When your child moves forward, follow. The more focused your child becomes on a specific thing, the easier it is to say what he or she is seeing, "You're watching that child play with the ball. There it goes, in and out. It rolled off the table, and that child is chasing it..."

When your child finally steps away to join in, let him or her go, but never, never sneak away! Get your hug and say when you'll be back, then leave without looking back, just like you would if you knew your child would be fine - because you do, or you wouldn't leave your child there in the first place! Children know the difference. Lingering looks create doubt. Clean departures create confidence.

Now this doesn't mean that your child won't cry the first few times you go. But here's another tip:

Children who join in on their own, cry to help themselves stay!

It's a twist, I know, but true because crying is a natural mechanism for relieving stress. You can feel it working when your own tears come up. It's the same thing for both you and your child. You've each accepted your own challenge; crying can reduce the stress and help you succeed.

Because this natural drop-off process takes patience, you will want to give yourself some extra time at first, but the progress you see day to day will make it worthwhile. You can speed the progress more by pointing out your child's strengths when you return for pick-up. Say what you know about your child's day, point out the strengths that helped him or her succeed, then let your child show you around, as in, "This morning you didn't want to be here! You cried, and that helped you stay. You calmed yourself down and handled it! Show me what you did today..."

If for some reason, your child's reluctance increases rather than decreases over time, talk to the staff and problem solve together. They are there to help you and have been through this before.

Easy drop-offs are just one of many successes you can create with the three simple steps of the Language of Listening: SAY WHAT YOU SEE, CAN DOs and STRENGTHs. Learn more about this simple solution for working with children in the [Language of Listening® Online Training Center](#) - short video clips for mobile lifestyles.



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