Frequently asked questions about kindergarten in the State of Ohio:

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### ADMISSION TO FIRST GRADE

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT KINDERGARTEN ENTRANCE

**At what age should my child start kindergarten?**  
A child must be at least 5 years old to enter kindergarten or 6 years old to enter first grade. Compulsory school age, or the minimum age in which a child must be enrolled in and attend school, is age 6. A family can choose to wait until a child turns 6 before enrolling the child in kindergarten.

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**Can a district charge for all-day kindergarten?**  
Yes. A district can charge tuition for all-day kindergarten but not for half-day kindergarten. If the district charges for all-day kindergarten, it must have a sliding fee scale for tuition costs based on family income.

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**Can I withdraw my 5-year-old child from kindergarten?**  
Yes. A child’s parent or guardian, working with the child’s teacher and principal, can formally withdraw a child from kindergarten if the child is 5 years old. A 6-year-old cannot be withdrawn from kindergarten because, again, Ohio law says a child must be in school by age 6.

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**Does Ohio require children to attend kindergarten?**  
Yes. Ohio law requires children in this state go to kindergarten. Districts cannot admit a child to first grade who has not completed kindergarten unless the district has admitted the child for early entrance to first grade, which means skipping kindergarten.

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**How do I know if my child is old enough to enter kindergarten?**  
Districts choose either Aug. 1 or Sept. 30 as the date by which a child must be 5 years old to enter kindergarten. Each school district should display this information on its website or be able to provide a parent who asks with the district’s age cut-off date for kindergarten.

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**Is all-day kindergarten required in Ohio?**  
No. Children must attend only half-day kindergarten (2.5 hours per day). Some school districts do offer all-day kindergarten, but if a family requests only half-day kindergarten for a child, the district must accommodate the family’s request.

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**What is a “begindergarten,” “transitional kindergarten” or “young fives” program?**

Some school districts use the terms “begindergarten,” “transitional kindergarten” or “young fives” to describe a program in which children attend school the year before they start kindergarten. Districts offer these programs because some children who are old enough for kindergarten are not ready to start kindergarten for some other reason.

For a child who is old enough for kindergarten and whose district and family decide to place the child in a “begindergarten,” “transitional kindergarten” or “young fives” program, attending this program can count as kindergarten. The Ohio Department of Education recognizes only one kindergarten, so if a child spends a year in one of these programs followed by one year in kindergarten, the district must report the kindergarten year to the Ohio Department of Education as a retention — in other words, as if the child had spent two years in kindergarten.   
   
Some districts operate these programs as preschool programs. In this case, the child can attend the program and then attend kindergarten without being recorded as spending two years in kindergarten. Families should know what they are enrolling their children in by asking their school districts how they describe their programs to the Ohio Department of Education — as preschool programs or kindergarten programs. If a district reports such a program as kindergarten and your child attends the program and then attends kindergarten, your child will be recorded as having been retained one year.

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## EARLY ADMISSION TO KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE

**Are the early entrance rules the same for all types of schools in Ohio?**  
All traditional public schools (city, local and exempted village school districts) must adopt acceleration policies, which are policies for advancing children to the next grade early. These include policies for granting students early entrance to school. In some cases, community (chartered) schools might admit only children who are eligible by age. For more information, see the [Charter School and Early Kindergarten Admission FAQ](http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Community-Schools/Guidance-Documents-Webinars-and-Presentations/Acceleration-and-Early-Kindergarten-Admission-FAQs-2-9-2015-docx-pdf.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US).

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**Can I apply to open enroll my child in another district if my home district says my child is not old enough to begin school?**  
No. Your child must first meet the age requirement for school entrance set by the district in which you reside *or*qualify for early entrance in that district before you can apply for enrollment to another district.

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**Can I home school my child for kindergarten in the upcoming school year, even if my child will not be old enough to attend kindergarten?**  
A home-school student is not a district student. While a family may choose to home school a child at any age, it must notify the district of residence of the decision to home school a child only if that child is of compulsory school age. Still, a family can notify the district it is homeschooling a student when the student is age 4 or 5, if it chooses. Once the family notifies the district that it plans to home school a student, the district will consider that student to be of compulsory school age.  
  
For example, if a child turns 5 in October and has been registered for home school as a kindergartener, the child must be registered as a student (home school or otherwise) again in the following school year, even though the child will not quite be 6 years old. At the end of kindergarten, the parent must give the district a written document or test score to show the child’s progress and readiness to move to the next grade level. If the parent chooses to enroll a child in a public or private school, the written document or test score may be used to determine the child’s grade placement.

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**How do I refer my child for early entrance?**  
Contact your local school district. The Ohio Department of Education recommends that each district follow its Academic Acceleration Policy for Advanced Learners to make decisions about early admission. For more information, see the [Ohio Gifted Education Early Entrance Guide](http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Early-Learning/Kindergarten/Early_Childhood_Kindergarten_EarlyEntryGuide.pdf.aspx).

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**If my child has not attended kindergarten, can I apply for early entrance to first grade?**  
When a parent asks for a child to be granted early entrance to first grade, the district follows an evaluation process similar to the one it uses to evaluate students for early entrance to kindergarten. After doing the evaluation, if the district determines the child is academically and developmentally ready for placement in first grade, the child can enter school as a first-grader instead of a kindergarten student.

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**Is early entrance the same as acceleration?**  
Yes. Early entrance to kindergarten or first grade is considered a whole-grade acceleration. Whole-grade acceleration is when a school or district, through an evaluation process outlined in district policy, places a student in a higher grade than is typical for the student’s age. The purpose of whole-grade acceleration is to give the student access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities. To learn more about acceleration, see [Academic Acceleration for Advanced Learners](https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education/Resources-for-Parents/Academic-Acceleration-for-Advanced-Learners).

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**My child was admitted early to kindergarten and we are moving to another school district in the middle of the school year. Will the new school district have to admit my child into kindergarten?**  
Yes. If your child has attended kindergarten in a public or chartered nonpublic school, no district can deny the child admission to a school based on his or her age. This does not apply to students who were home-schooled or students who attended non-chartered, non-tax-supported schools. For these students, the new school district will determine what grade to place the student in.

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**My district did not admit my child early to kindergarten, and I disagree with the decision. What are my next steps?**  
A family may file an appeal to the school district superintendent or the superintendent’s designee. Contact your local school district to learn more about filing an appeal to the superintendent if you disagree with the decision regarding early admission. The superintendent’s (or designee’s) decision is final. However, the child may be referred for evaluation again at the next available opportunity by the child's parent or guardian, an educator employed by the district, or a preschool educator, pediatrician or psychologist who knows the child. If a request is made 60 days before school starts, the child must be assessed before the start of the school year to determine placement.

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**What is early admission to kindergarten or first grade?**  
Early admission, or early entrance, occurs when a district evaluates a child who is not yet old enough to enter kindergarten or first grade and admits the child to either grade early because the child is capable of succeeding in one of these grades. When granted early entrance to first grade, a child does not attend kindergarten.

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**What type of tests will my child be given during the early entrance evaluation?**  
For children who turn 5 after the district’s age eligibility date (Aug. 1 or Sept. 30) but before Jan. 1, the school district determines the evaluation process. Typically, the evaluation considers academic, social, behavioral, and developmental factors. Ohio law says districts must use the Ohio Department of Education’s only approved evaluation process, the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS). The Iowa Acceleration Scale is not a test, but an evaluation tool. The decision to accelerate a child rests with the district evaluation committee, which must determine appropriate placement.

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## ADMISSION TO FIRST GRADE

**If my child completed kindergarten, will he or she continue to first grade next school year?**  
The district where the child will attend first grade has the authority to ensure the child has successfully completed kindergarten before admitting the child to first grade. No district can admit a child to first grade who has not successfully completed kindergarten.

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**What does “successfully completed” mean?**  
If your child has completed the required number of school hours and made appropriate progress, he or she will most likely continue to first grade the following school year. Schools must be open and provide instruction to students for at least 455 hours in the case of kindergarten students. If these students are attending all-day kindergarten, they receive at least 910 hours of instruction.

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