

# Starting 3-Year-Old Kindergarten.



## What is a kindergarten program?

Kindergarten (also known as kinder) is an early education program for young children aged 3 to 5, led by an early childhood teacher.

3-Year-Old Kinder has been introduced across Victoria, which means families can now access 2 years of government-funded kinder for their children before they start school.

Following 3-Year-Old Kinder, children transition to 4-Year-Old Kinder or more hours of 4-Year-Old Kinder (Pre Prep). Kinder program with more hours of 4-Year-Old Kinder are being introduced across Victoria and will replace the standard 4-Year-Old Kinder program by 2036. This are the same play-based programs however this program will be offered for up to 30 hours per week, compared to 15 hours per week offered in the current 4-Year-Old-Kinder program. Kinder services and local councils can advise if more hours of 4-Year-Old Kinder will be available for your child.

## How will my child benefit from kinder?

Kinder helps your child to learn and grow. Research shows that quality kinder 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 kinder programs are generally more independent and confident and are more likely to make a smooth transition to primary school.

Taking part in a quality kinder program from 3 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.

Two years of quality early childhood education is shown to have more impact than 1 year and can lift children's outcomes across all learning domains. With more hours available, teachers can provide more intentional interactions that support the development of learning concepts through play, which will give children opportunities to embed and extend their learning.

# When can my child **start** kinder?

Children can attend kinder programs in the 2 years before they start primary school.

Families with children born between January and April can choose which year to start at 3-Year-Old Kinder. These children can start in the same year they turn 3, or in the year they turn 4 years of age. Due to staff requirements, some services may ask that children start attending at kinder 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 3-Year-Old Kinder program, in comparison to their peers.

If this is the case for your child and you accept a place, kinder will hold your child's place until they are old enough to attend.

Kinder services will discuss with you directly about how they can support your child to join their program once they turn 3.

When your child starts at kinder directly relates to the age they will start at primary school. When enrolling at 3-Year-Old Kinder, we encourage families to plan ahead and consider the age they would like their child to start at school.



| If your child was born between: | Your child is eligible to attend 3-Year-Old Kinder in: |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 January 2023 – 30 April 2023  | 2026 or 2027                                           |
| 1 May 2023 – 31 December 2023   | 2027                                                   |
| 1 January 2024 – 30 April 2024  | 2027 or 2028                                           |
| 1 May 2024 – 31 December 2024   | 2028                                                   |
| 1 January 2025 – 30 April 2025  | 2028 or 2029                                           |
| 1 May 2025 – 31 December 2025   | 2029                                                   |
| 1 January 2026–30 April 2026    | 2029 or 2030                                           |

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Children can attend a 3-Year-Old Kinder program at either a long day care (childcare) centre or at a standalone (sessional) kinder.

2

You can also 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 3-Year-Old Kinder.

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

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 programs to suit your child's individual learning and development. In some cases, your child may benefit from starting a kinder 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. Consider seeking advice from trusted early childhood professionals by:

- attending kinder 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, the educators will be regularly assessing your child's 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 kinder. If you feel that your child may benefit from being older when starting school (that is, 5 years old turning 6 during their Foundation year), then consider starting your child at 3-Year-Old Kinder later.

## 3-Year-Old Kinder is for all **children**.

Kinder 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 kinder 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 3-Year-Old Kinder?

In most cases, children make a successful transition to 4-Year-Old Kinder.

There may be a small number of children for whom an additional year of kinder at their current program level is appropriate.

From 2026, across Victoria, children who meet the applicable eligibility requirements can access an additional year of either:

- 3-Year-Old Kinder; or
- 4-Year-Old Kinder/More hour of 4-Year-Old Kinder

That is, eligible children can access up to three years of funded kindergarten in Victoria.

That is, eligible children can access up to 3 years of funded kinder in Victoria. For more information talk to your child's teacher or visit the website: [Does my child need an additional year of kinder?](#)

