

If your child turns 5 on or before September 1st of the school year in question, then they are:

Age 5= when they are in Kindergarten

Age 6=1st grade

Age 7=2nd grade

Age 8=3rd grade

Age 9=4th grade

Age 10=5th grade

Age 11=6th grade

Age 12=7th grade

Age 13=8th grade

Age 14=9th grade

Age 15=10th grade

Age 16=11th grade

Age 17=12th grade

Your child must have been born on or before September 1, 2021 to go to Kindergarten in the 2026-2027 School Year.

Example: A child who turns 5 on September **15**, 2026 would not be eligible to start kindergarten alongside the children who have 5th birthdays on or before September 1, 2026

That child would start Kindergarten in the **next** school year, and turn 6 **during** the Kindergarten year.

Because of the wide developmental range between a child who only turned 5 a few days before the first day of school and a child who turned 6 just a few days after starting school, the law only requires that all children be 5 before they are allowed to start Kindergarten. Some parents with very young 5 year olds (July and August birthdays) may also opt to refrain from sending their child to Kindergarten that year. That is one of the reasons Kindergarten is not compulsory for children just because they are age-eligible. Children are only compelled to enter school when they are 6 years of age. Children must complete an accredited Kindergarten before attending 1st grade.

If your child turns 5 any time **after** September 1st of the school year in question, then they will start Kindergarten next year and then be:

Age 6=when they are in Kindergarten

Age 7=1st grade

Age 8=2nd grade

Age 9=3rd grade

Age 10=4th grade

Age 11=5th grade

Age 12=6th grade

Age 13=7th grade

Age 14=8th grade

Age 15=9th grade

Age 16=10th grade

Age 17=11th grade

Age 18=12th grade

For International Families: Rhode Island public schools will make every attempt to place your child in the appropriate grade based on our education system of Kindergarten through Grade 12. They must comply with the law that states a child must be fully 5 by September 1 before they enter public school. The public schools are unable to place your child in grades for which they are not age-qualified, even if the system at home uses different age standards or calendars.

Early Childhood and Child Care Terms:

Birth to 12 months = Infants. A child this age would be in a child care setting, not a school setting. Most child care settings will not enroll a child less than 6 weeks of age. Not all settings accept children under 3 years of age.

13 months to 24 months =Pre-Toddler. A child this age would be in child care.

25 months to 36 months = Toddler. A child this age would be in child care.

3-year olds may be in child care when 3 years of age, OR may attend a program called Pre-School*, and they can be in Pre-School from age 3 until they start Kindergarten. Children who need all-day childcare may be enrolled in a Pre-school, or be in a childcare. Typically, a child should be toilet trained to attend a formal preschool program.

4-year olds = the year before they are eligible for Kindergarten is called Pre-Kindergarten. A child must be 4 by the first day of September to attend a formal Pre-K Program. If the child isn't old enough to attend a Pre-K Program, they may attend all-day childcare or a preschool. Not all children go to a formal Pre-K program.

5-year olds=the year in which the child turns 5 by the first day of September is when the child is eligible to attend Kindergarten. In the US, there is only one formal Kindergarten year. Both Public and Private Schools offer Kindergarten programs. Some Private Schools offer Pre-School for children under 4 years of age.

*Some places classify all programs for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years as Pre-School. This is more to differentiate from the child care settings of the very young children.

The Rhode Island Public Schools do offer a limited Pre-School Program as part of their Special Education program. All children aged 3-5 with special educational needs are automatically enrolled, along with an equal number of more typically-developing children as Peer Models. Enrollment for this is done at the public school district where they child lives. Peer models are accepted by lottery.

Rhode Island is working to offer Pre-Kindergarten to all children who are 4 years of age by the first day of September. At this time, the Rhode Island Department of Education has a Pilot Program offering Pre-Kindergarten in certain towns across the state. These classes are selected by lottery. Go to the RI Department of Education to learn more. <https://ride.ri.gov/instruction-assessment/early-childhood-education/ri-pre-k>

Pre-School, Child Development Center, Daycare, Childcare Center, Early Learning Center, and Nursery School are all terms that describe a place where children are cared for in a shared setting by adult staff other than their parents. These are all programs that charge fees or tuition. There are some government-funded programs that may be offered at little or no cost to low-income families, but these are income-dependent and not available to every child. Child care is generally viewed as a service that must be paid for by the parents of the child.