



# Users Manual

For the Helpful Entry  
Level Skills Checklist  
(4th Ed.)

Beth Rous  
University of Kentucky



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**Contact Information**

Early Childhood Research and Development Initiative

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# Purpose Of The Helpful Entry Level Skills

The Helpful Entry Level Skills Checklist is designed to assist early care and education providers in selecting functional skills children may need to make a successful transition into group based settings at the kindergarten or first grade levels.

These skills focus on attending, compliance, following directions, turn taking, classroom routines and rules, and independent functioning. Helpful Entry Level Skills are defined as those survival skills, or social and behavioral skills, often necessary for a child to function successfully in group based settings. While the acquisition of these skills is NOT a requirement for placement in any classroom or program, the acquisition of these skills can help children in their adjustment to a new environment.

The Helpful Entry Level Skills Checklist is not intended to take the place of a focus on language, motor, cognitive and pre-academic skills. Nor is the goal to ensure all children have these skills as prerequisites for specific classroom or program placement. Rather, the goal of the Helpful Entry Level Skills Checklist is to provide the child with the optimal number of skills possible to help make their adjustment successful.

Many of the skills listed in the Helpful Entry Level Skills Checklist may already be addressed

through a child's current instructional program. However, a systematic way of determining expectations in receiving environments of classrooms may not be in place. On one hand, it is not possible to determine a specific set of functional skills appropriate for all children entering a new classroom setting, considering the individual strengths and weaknesses of the children and the various programs. On the other hand, it is possible to determine some skills that are common and desirable for most children in group settings at the kindergarten or first grade levels.

In summary, the Helpful Entry Levels Skills Checklist offers a systematic way of recording and identifying specific functional skills for children going through the transition process. It is to be used as a guide for teaching young children skills that lead to independence, rather than as a prerequisite for entry into a public school program.

# Rationale

The skills included on the Helpful Entry Level Skills Checklist reflect early research in transitions (Vincent, Salisbury, Walter, Brown, & Gruenewald, 1980; Hains, Fowler, Schwartz, Kottwitz, & Rosenkoetter, 1989; Zigler, 1985) which found many children who experience “failure” in kindergarten or first grade have difficulty with social/survival skills rather than with pre-academic or academic skills. Subsequent research has confirmed these early findings (Lin, Lawrence & Gorrell, 2003; Wesley & Buyssee, 2003), with teachers, administrators, and families indicating a focus on social and communication skills are more critical to ensuring readiness for school than academic skills alone.

For this checklist, transition skills related to more successful transitions into kindergarten and first

grade settings are divided into five categories, each of which is supported by research. These include classroom rules (e.g., Kemp & Carter, 2005; Troup & Malone, 2002; Kemp & Carter, 2005); work skills (e.g., Prigg, 2002; Kemp & Carter, 2000); communication skills (e.g., Agbeke & Denkyirah, 2012; Prigg, 2002; Gamel-McCormick & Rous, 2000); social/behavior skills (e.g., Pears, Kim, Healey, Yoerger, & Fisher, 2015; Daley, Monk, & Carlson, 2011; Lin, Lawrence, & Gorrell, 2003); and self-management skills (e.g., Pears & Peterson, 2018; McIntyre, Blancher, & Baker, 2006; Troup & Malone, 1999).

A reference list and summary of the research on transition cited in this document can be found at <https://www.ecrdi.info/>.

## Administering the Helpful Entry Level Skills

Within 30 days of enrollment, each child should be screened. During the first few weeks of enrollment, the teacher observes the child to determine the presence/absence of the stated skills. The instrument should be used as a checklist, not as a formal instrument for assessing skills.

The Helpful Entry Level Skills Checklist, which can be administered in approximately 5-10 minutes per child, is completed by using the response guidelines on the next page.



### Yes Column

The skill is well established. The child performs the skill independently or with occasional prompts. In the yes column, the following may be used as prompt symbols:

- V: The child can perform the skill when provided with verbal supports.
- M: The child can perform the skill when provided with adult or peer modeling.
- P: The child can perform the skill when provided with physical supports.



### No Column

The behavior has not been observed or is seen as a significant problem for the child.



### I/E Column

- I: The child exhibits inconsistent behavior (differs by day or by person they are interacting with).
- E: The child shows signs of emergent skill development.

A “comment” section is provided to indicate adaptations, concerns and/or reasons why the child might not exhibit this skill. For example, when assessing Communication Skill #2 (Communicated own needs/preferences), consider a nonverbal child may be able to indicate his/her needs by signing or using an augmentative communication system. In this case, mark the skill “yes” and in the comment section indicate how the child communicates.

After administering the checklist, identify those skills most likely to interfere with the child’s successful transition. The skill number should be placed in the Target Skills section of the checklist for each of the five categories. These are the skills that can be the target of instruction. Stress should be placed on those skills most critical for the child. Many of the other skills will be incorporated into the curriculum by way of

incidental teaching.

The first page of the checklist contains identifying information about the child and the child’s program. Space is also provided for the target skills to be summarized from pre, mid and posttests. A summary sheet of all the skills included in the Checklist is provided so it can be attached to a copy of the first page and sent to families, other staff members and/or agencies working with the child.

During family conferences, share the checklist with parents. Discuss its purpose and importance. With the family, target skills as goals for the child’s transition year and include them on the child’s IFSP/IEP as appropriate. When appropriate, give the family suggestions for facilitating the acquisition of these skills within the home environment.

## Midyear Evaluation

The checklist provides an opportunity for the teacher to reassess the entry level skills at midyear. The checklist can be administered to determine the child's progress and to allow the teacher to update goals for the child.

## Post-Test Evaluation

During the last month of the child's participation in the classroom or program, administer the posttest section of the Helpful Entry Level Skills Checklist. The same guidelines for administering the pretest should be followed. The form itself will reflect achievement of the skill. Any discussion of a child's progress can be included in a final summary or as a narrative statement attached to the checklist.

During the final parent conference, review the checklist along with other components of the child's IFSP/IEP if appropriate. Give the parents a copy of the checklist and suggestions for fostering continued support of the skills.

## Follow Up

A copy of the Helpful Entry Levels Skills Checklist can be sent to the child's receiving teacher or program. This may be included in a follow-up packet prepared by the program. Educational summaries, work samples, current evaluation or assessment results and other pertinent information may also be included. The child's parents may take the packet to the receiving teacher or program, or the program may send the packet through the system.