

But Why: A Podcast for Curious Kids

[What If You're Scared To Start School?](#)

April 13, 2021

Jane 00:20

This is But Why: a Podcast for Curious Kids from Vermont Public Radio. I'm Jane Lindholm. On this show, we take questions from kids just like you and we find answers. Sometimes those answers come from experts. And sometimes they come from other curious kids. School is starting up again after a summer break for many of you, especially those of you in the Northern Hemisphere, and it may be your first time back in a classroom building in a long time. Some of you in other parts of the world are in remote learning situations again, and you might not know when you'll be going back. It can all be a bit unsettling, especially if you're just starting kindergarten. That's the case for Odin. Here's what he wrote in an email one of his adults helped him send to us. "I'm five years old. I live in Wilson, Wyoming. My questions are, if I am terrified about kindergarten, do I have to go? What should I do if I'm scared to go to kindergarten? And what if kids are mean to me? Well, Odin, yes, I think you do have to go to kindergarten. School is where we learn important things like reading, writing, math, and languages. It's also where we go to learn how to learn. But it's totally natural to feel scared when you're going to start something new in an unfamiliar place. We thought you might appreciate getting some advice from other kids who have just recently gone through kindergarten themselves, and from some teachers and other people who work in schools and have found some pretty good ways over the years to help kids get through the scary times. We asked all of them to send in responses saying what they're excited about and nervous about and if they have any tips to manage those nervous feelings. Let's start with Zoe.

Zoe 02:03

I'm 10 years old, and I live in Colorado. And what I'm really excited to do when I get back to school is see all my friends. What I'm not really excited about to do at school is having to take tests. And if you're going into school and you're kind of nervous, um, my advice to you is just have fun and try to make some friends and school you will be a lot better.

Jane 02:28

Some of you wanted to tell Odin what it was like for you when you started school.

Isadora 02:33

Hi, I'm Isadora and I'm from Kelowna, BC. I was scared the first time to go to kindergarten too. But when you step into the classroom, there's lots of nice kids. And they play with you a lot.

Ollie 02:48

My name is Ollie. I'm six years old. I live in Canberra, Australia. I started kindergarten this year. And the best things about kindergarten is making new friends, and learn new things.

Clarissa 03:05

Hi, I'm Clarissa, and I am eight years old and I live in Ottawa, Canada. What I did for the first day of kindergarten was that I remind myself that my teacher will always help me and that I am brave and confident.

Jane 03:21

Lots of you have specific strategies for what to do when you're afraid.

Michaela 03:25

Hi, my name is Michaela and I'm from Kansas and I am eight and if I was going back to school after coronavirus I would bring my fidget. My fidget is a sensory toy, which is something that you use with your hands.

Monty 03:42

Hi, my name is Monty. I'm six years old. I'm calling from Newhall, California. What's great about school is you'll get have fun. And if you're scared, you can always help yourself with a snuggly toy or lovey so it makes you feel great. Or toy from your parents that you miss.

Iris 04:05

Hello, my name is Iris. I am five years old and I'm from San Francisco. And my idea for for going to school is drawing a picture of you and your mom hugging.

Jane 04:19

Great idea. You could draw a picture of your mom or of anyone else you love. Maybe it's your pet. I know some people think hugging a dog is about the best thing in the world. Let's hear a few more of these great ideas starting with Evelyn who's from Georgia.

Evelyn 04:36

Hi, I'm five years old. It's okay, Odin. We're all little scared when we're going to kindergarten and I'm going to school too, so don't be scared.

Julius 04:51

My name is Julius. I'm eight years old. I live in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. And my advice for Odin is that when I start school. I feel a little nervous. Then when I step in, I feel okay. For the first few days, I play by myself. But after those first few days are done, I play with others.

Anthony 05:17

Hi, my name is Anthony. I'm eight years old. I live in San Diego, California. And my best tip to not be afraid to go back to school is to think of all the happy thoughts. For example, you could think of playing with new friends and finally be able to play on the playground again.

Eliza 05:40

Hey, my name's Eliza. I'm five years old. I live in Philadelphia. When I'm in school, and I'm nervous or shy. I get to know people so well. It helps me be less shy.

Vivian 06:03

Hello, my name is Vivian. I'm seven and a half years old. And I live in Landisville, Pennsylvania. And my advice for Odin is if you're scared to start kindergarten, you're gonna meet new friends and learn new things. And that's what I'm looking forward to.

Jane 06:34

You know, in school, there are lots of adults whose job it is to look out for you. In addition to your teachers, your school might have someone called a guidance counselor. A guidance counselor is there to help you. Sometimes with big feelings or to help you learn how people are supposed to behave in school. They might meet with you one on one or in small groups, or they might come into your classroom from time to time. It all depends on your school. guidance counselors can also help you when something is worrying you, so we asked one for some advice.

Tosha 07:05

Hi, Odin. My name is Tosha and I am a school counselor in Missouri. It is so exciting that you are starting kindergarten soon. I hear that you're feeling a little nervous and worried. I hope I can help. First and most importantly, everyone gets nervous and a little scared before school starts. Even the grownups. Everyone in your class is going to be new, so you will definitely not be alone. The best way to take charge of our nervousness and worry is to plan ahead. If you can visit the school and your classroom before school starts. If you have open house, or meet the teacher night, make sure you go. This is a great chance to get familiar with everything at your school. If you don't have a chance to meet your teacher before school, starts have your parents drive you by the school and walk around outside to just look around. Start getting in a school routine now. About a week before school starts, wake up at the time you will need to wake up during school. Also get your clothes laid out the night before. And if you are going to take your lunch to school, and can make it ahead of time, do it the night before. Pack your backpack ahead of time as well. Having all of these things done early will help you feel more prepared and less nervous. If you can check books out from the library, grab a few books that talk about kindergarten or worry. Some good books to read would be: First Day Jitters, The Night Before Kindergarten, Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten, and The Kissing Hand. Most importantly, talk to your parents about your worries, they can give you reassurance and help you feel more comfortable and prepared for your big day. If it helps, you could have your parent places small object that is special to you in your backpack so it is with you and close on your first day. Just make sure you don't get it out of your backpack without asking your teacher. You can also make a hug button. Have your parent draw heart on the inside of your hand and on the inside of their hand. Hold hands to charge your hug buttons. If you feel sad or miss them while you are at school, press your hug button and it will send you a hug. On the big day. You'll feel nervous and excited all at the same time. Right before you go into school, take a big deep breath and let it out slowly and go into school ready for your new adventure. I hope you have a wonderful year in kindergarten, Odin. You will be amazing.

Jane 10:00

I hope your school has a guidance counselor you can reach out to, but if they don't, you definitely have your teachers. Lots of you told us teachers are the best people to talk to when you're nervous.

Daniah 10:11

Hey, my name is Daniah. And I am 11 years old. I'm from Saudi Arabia. And whenever you're scared first first day school, it's ok, the teachers are very nice at school. And they even help you study. They are so nice. And it's very fun, I promise.

Sarah 10:40

My name's Sarah. And I am seven years old. And if you if you're scared school, you go tell your teacher. And it's real fun. And yeah.

Karen 10:59

Hi, my name is Karen. And six and a half years old. Going into kindergarten is scary. But you just have to be brave. Teachers are nice. You can do fun projects. If you get stuck on stuff, you can't figure out the math problem. You can the teachers will help you.

Posey 11:21

Hi, my name is Posey. I'm eight years old and I am from Toronto. My advice is that you shouldn't be scared to go to school, because your teachers can help you in many different ways.

Jane 11:36

We asked a teacher what she tells kids who are nervous on the first day.

Juliana 11:40

Hi, Odin, thank you so much for your question. I think that so many kids are feeling scared before the start of school. And so I wanted to give you some advice. And I hope that this helps you get ready for that first day of school. And that this helps you have a great day, on your first day of kindergarten. My name is Ms. Earth.

Jane 12:01

Ms. Earth is what her students call her. But she also goes by Juliana Urtubey. Ms. Urtubey is a special education teacher from Nevada, and she's this year's National Teacher of the Year in the US.

Juliana 12:14

So what should kids do if they're feeling scared when they're starting kindergarten? My first thing for you to think about is that it's okay to feel big feelings, especially when there's a big change coming. starting school is a huge change. And I want you to remember that everybody, even your teacher, were all feeling big feelings for the first day of school. Sometimes some people are feeling excitement. Sometimes people feel nervous. Sometimes people feel scared and all those feelings are okay to feel. Remember that we are all feeling and going through this together. So Odin, I asked some friends to help me answer this question. The first person I asked for help is my friend max. He just finished kindergarten this last year. And he asked me to tell you that if you're scared, it's okay. Take a deep breath. And remember to believe in yourself. Ms. Perez, a teacher in Nevada, who teaches kindergarten, told me to let you know that usually teachers have open house. And that means you can go to your school and see your classroom and see the chair you're going to sit in. And that she wants you to remember that you can take a picture of your family and of the people you love and put it in your backpack. That way you can always remember that your family's with you. The other thing she wanted

to tell you is that your teacher cannot wait to learn all about your family. So share with your teacher, the things that your family likes to do for fun, share with your teacher that things that your family does at home. And those things will help your teacher understand you and your family. Ms. Brown from Connecticut, who also teaches kindergarten, told me to remind you that all the kids in your class are so excited to be your friend. She says that you can take a little token from your house, that means a little thing from your house. Maybe it's a little teddy bear or a keychain and ask everybody in your family to give it a little kiss. And then you can tuck it away in your pencil pouch on your backpack. And just remember that they're there with you. And they're rooting you on because they're so excited that you're starting kindergarten. She also suggested that you can read books about the first day of kindergarten, and that will give you a picture of what that day will be like. So again, Odin, it's okay to be scared. We're scared with you. We're excited with you and just know that everybody's rooting you on to have an awesome not just first day at kindergarten but a first year in school, we wish you all the luck and remember, be brave and let other people know when you're feeling big feelings so we can all help you.

Jane 15:10

Thank you so much Ms. Earth. Here's one more piece of advice for Odin.

15:16

My name is Tejas. I am 10 years old, and I am from Canberra, Australia. I like playing with my friends at break time, and I love doing maths. If you're scared about school, just remember your friends will be feeling the same way. And they will be happy to see you. And you'll probably have lots of fun together.

Jane 15:37

Coming up how to make friends.

Jane 15:41

This is But Why: a Podcast for Curious Kids. I'm Jane Lindholm. Today we're talking about what to do if you're nervous about starting school. It's a question that came in specifically from Odin in Wyoming. But we have a hunch that many of you have had the first day jitters before. And maybe you're feeling a little apprehensive, a little nervous again this year. Lots of you sent in wonderful suggestions for how to get through the scary or hard times. And one word kept coming up over and over and your responses: friends. H

Ferdinand 16:16

Hello, my name is Ferdinand. And I'm eight years old. And we live in Belgium. And just try to be cool. Try to make friends as much as possible and fit in.

Vera 16:35

I'm Vera and I'm six years old. I'm from Toronto. And this is what's great about school, you can make new friends and that's really fun.

Zack 16:47

This is Zack and I'm seven years old, Merseyside in the United Kingdom. And you get to meet new friends in school. My favorite part about school is meeting new friends.

Josh 17:07

My name is Josh and I'm six years old. I'm from Merseyside in the UK. Don't worry, you'll be able to make new friends.

Sly 17:17

Hi, I'm Sly. I'm seven years old. I live in Brooklyn, New York. And my advice, if you're scared for the school year, as you know, you're going to make new friends and your mom and dad are going to pick you up. You're not staying at school forever. And if you have friends, they're great. You can bond with them a little more. And if you don't, and you're making new friends, okay? You can always find a person that you're you'll like and in your school year. It's not like you'll never find someone you like. So that's my advice.

Jane 17:53

But how do you make new friends? That's a question Liam wants the answer to.

Liam 17:58

And I'm five years old. And I live in Cincinnati, and I'm going to a new school. And I have friends. But I will know how to make new friends at my new school.

Jane 18:11

Luckily, Liam, we have some great suggestions for you.

Lucy 18:14

Hi, my name is Lucy. And I live in Montpelier, Vermont, and I'm seven years old. And my suggestion for kids they're scared of going to school is get to know everyone's names. And if you forget them, it's okay to ask again.

Ben 18:33

Hi, I'm Ben. I live in Clarkston, Michigan. And I'm six and a half years old. What I would do, is say hi to all the kids and you can see kids that you might not recognize and kids you might recognize. You do need to make sure you follow the rules. That's pretty important. Also, what you might want to do is you you might want to play with some like new kids first or play with the old kids. I don't know where you would do after that. But it's your choice if you want to play with the new kids or they old kids first? But anyways, that was a really good question. Thank you. Bye.

Zoe 19:21

Hi, Odin. My name is Zoe. I am six years old. I'm from San Jose, California. I heard you're going to kindergarten. Well, here's some advice. Take a deep breath. Be kind to somebody and they'll be kind to you. And you'll make a friend. Bye, Odin. Have a nice day. Good luck.

Jane 19:47

I like that idea. Be kind to someone and they're more likely to be kind to you. We have another teacher with some advice for how to get through this year.

Christie Nold 19:56

Hi, Odin. I hear that you're going into kindergarten My name is Christie and I'm going into sixth grade for the eighth time. The first time I went in, it was as a student. And now I've gone back seven times as a teacher. Even though I'm going in for my eighth time, I still get nervous too, the thing that I want you to know about this school year is that we don't really know what to expect. And although that might sound scary, what I also want you to know is that we're in it together, that we care about you, that your teachers are going to be there for you. And that as students, you can be there for each other as well. I hope that you have a great year. And I hope you'll find ways to calm your nerves as the year goes on. Good luck.

Jane 20:43

Christie Nold is a teacher in South Burlington, Vermont. Now, we don't know what school is going to be like for all of you this year. For some of you, you'll be wearing masks or sitting at spaced apart desks. Some of you might spend part of the year in remote learning, not in a school building. And things could change a little bit during the school year. Even with uncertainty, lots of you told us you're looking forward to getting back to school. This is Rosie, who's four and lives in Tennessee.

Rosie 21:12

School's fun, it can help you learn.

Abraham 21:20

Hello, I am Abraham and I live in the Boston area in Massachusetts. And I'm seven years old. I've advice for you if you're scared going to school. So here's one thing, I'm excited to do the physical library books because last year, we had to use ebooks.

Sol 21:45

Hi, my name is Sol. I'm 4 years old, and I'm from Brooklyn. And I'm going to kindergarten too. And I feel excited because you don't know what I'm getting to do for circle time.

Yotam 21:58

Hi, my name is Yotam. And I'm five and I'm and I live in Israel and I like learning new things.

Nili 22:10

My name is Nili. And in two months, I'm gonna be seven. I live in Israel. And I like best science class.

Paz 22:29

I'm Paz. And I live in Spain. At school, I like to play with my friends when it's time to play outside.

Roger 22:40

Hi, I'm Roger. I'm three and a half years old. And I live in Brooklyn, New York. And what I'm really excited about for new school is that my brother's gonna go and I'm gonna have a gym teacher, and I'm going to learn to read.

23:05

Hi, my name is Nick. I'm nine years old. And I live in Litchfield, Connecticut. And what I'm looking forward to doing at school is to read a lot and play Foursquare at recess.

Jane 23:21

We hope you all have something you're looking forward to in school this year. And thanks so much for your question, Odin. Sometimes when one person admits they're feeling nervous, it helps everyone else too. And if you've made it all the way through and you're still wondering:

Clara 23:37

Why do you have to go to school? Hi, my name is Clara. I live in Australia.

Henry 23:44

Hi, my name is Henry. I'm four years old. And I'm from Denver, Colorado. And my question is, why do we have to go to school?

Jane 23:56

We actually talked about that in an episode a few years ago. You can find it in the show notes for this episode. And that's all the time we have for today. Thanks to all of you who shared words of wisdom for Odin. We hope you all have a great school year. But *Why* is produced by Melody Bodette and me, Jane Lindholm, at Vermont Public Radio. Our show is distributed by PRX and our theme music is by Luke Reynolds. We had additional music in this episode from Blue Dot sessions. We'll be back in two weeks. Until then, stay curious.