

What Should an Incoming 5th Grader Know in the Fall?

2026-2027

By the start of fifth grade, students working **at grade level** should confidently have a strong grasp of reading comprehension, including analyzing multiple texts, understanding main ideas, and discussing stories with peers. Writing skills should include structuring essays, proofreading, and using proper grammar and punctuation. In math, they should confidently solve multi-step problems, work with fractions, understand place value, and have their basic multiplication/division facts memorized. Social studies knowledge expands to geography, early American history, and cultural developments, while science covers concepts like the solar system, states of matter, and classification of animals. Additionally, new fifth graders should demonstrate independent learning, cooperative teamwork, and effective communication skills, preparing them for the challenges of fifth grade.

Skills to get ready for Grade 5: English language arts and literacy

To get ready for Fifth Grade, kids start reading more challenging material, including news articles and other informational texts. They add to their vocabulary and use evidence from the text when they summarize. By the beginning of fifth grade, students are expected to have mastered the following language and literacy skills:

- Identify the main idea of what's been read, explaining how the author used facts and evidence to back up the text
- Compare writing from different cultures
- Understand information presented in drawings, timelines, charts, and other non-text formats
- Take notes and organize facts; create oral and written reports using the information
- Participate in class discussions about specific questions and share their own ideas and understandings in relation to the discussion
- Use dialogue and descriptive language in stories to show a character's inner life

Skills to get ready for grade 5: Mathematics

In fifth grade, kids continue to practice addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division on paper and in word problems. They do more in-depth work with fractions. They also start to understand the relationship between fractions and decimals. Here are some of the activities kids do in fourth grade that will prepare them for fifth-grade math:

- Solve multi-step word problems, including those that use units of measurement
- Work with multi-digit numbers
- Compare fractions by looking at the top (numerator) and bottom (denominator) numbers; create fractions that are equal to each other ($\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{2}{4}$) and add and subtract fractions with the same denominator (Watch a video of how students compare fractions.)
- Recognize that multiplying fractions is like adding and subtracting whole numbers (Watch how kids learn how to multiply fractions.)
- Learn to change fractions with the denominators in multiples of ten (10, 100, 1000) to decimals
- Compare decimals and fractions using $>$ (more than), $=$ (equal to), and $<$ (less than) and place them correctly on a number line

5th Grade Skills Checklist

Here's a quick 5th grade skills checklist summarizing the essential milestones for this pivotal year:

- **Reading:** Identify the main idea, compare writing styles, interpret charts and diagrams, and read independently.
- **Writing:** Master essays (expository, persuasive, and narrative), revise and proofread, and use descriptive language effectively.
- **Math:** Solve multi-step problems, work with fractions and decimals, and understand polygons and measurements.
- **Social Studies:** Use map scales, learn about U.S. regions, explore historical events, and understand current events.
- **Science:** Study matter, density, food webs, photosynthesis, Earth & space systems, and conduct experiments using the scientific method.
- **Social Skills:** Manage tasks, work in groups, follow directions, and communicate respectfully.

49 Things Your 5th Grader Should Know When They Finish

Below are the detailed academic and social skills your child should develop by the end of fifth grade:

5th Grade Reading

1. Identify what the author's main point is in the story and explain/ show evidence that supports the text
2. Compare writing styles in different cultures
3. Understand various forms of information (charts, drawings, timelines)
4. Understand more difficult examples of cause-and-effect
5. Work on research projects in groups
6. Read grade-level assigned books

5th Grade Writing

7. Take notes and organize facts (written and oral reports)
8. Use dialogue and descriptive language when writing a story (ex: The bright rays of the sun shined off the ocean's cold, salty waves.)
9. Know how to revise, edit, and proofread their work
10. Mastered writing expository, descriptive, persuasive, and narrative essays
11. Know how to write other forms of writing (personal letters, poetry)
12. Understand and know the figurative language and how to use it properly (metaphors, similes, personification, alliteration, idioms, hyperboles, and onomatopoeia)
13. Mastered prefixes, suffixes, homophones, and root words
14. Know proper punctuation and the parts of speech

5th Grade Math

15. Work with multi-digit numbers
16. Solve multi-step word problems
17. Compare fractions by using the numerator (top) and denominator (bottom)
18. Create fractions that are equal to each other ($\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{6}$)
19. Know how to subtract and add fractions
20. Know how to multiply fractions
21. Learn to change fractions with the denominators in multiples of ten to decimals
22. Compare fractions using $>$ (more than) $<$ (less than) and $=$ (equal to) and place them on a number line in order from least to greatest
23. Know measurements and what is equivalent to them (1ft. = 12 in. 1yd. = 3ft. 1mi. = 5,280 ft.)
24. Should know what polygons are
25. Should be able to identify polygons (triangles, quadrilaterals, pentagons, hexagons, and octagons)

5th Grade Social Studies

26. Measure distance using map scales
27. Know our county's five regions (Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Midwest, and West)
28. Know the highest points in the world (ex: Asia = Mt. Everest)
29. Know about medieval Europe
30. Know about the American Revolution
31. Become introduced and familiar with the U.S. Constitution
32. Identify customs, celebrations, and traditions in various cultures and groups
33. Know their state's physical features and know-how to identify places/ things on a map (mountains, rivers, cities)
34. Know what a current event is and why it is important to discuss them

5th Grade Science

35. Know the circulatory system
36. Understand and know what matter is and how it works
37. Understand mass, volume, and density
38. Know about earthquakes
39. Describe famous volcanoes
40. Know how mountains are formed
41. Understand cold and warm fronts and how weather changes
42. Understand earth, physical, and life science
43. Know how to conduct an experiment (scientific method)

Social Skills and Abilities

44. Know how to juggle multiple tasks and assignments
45. Have a great deal of confidence
46. Work cooperatively in a group
47. Follow directions and participate in group activities
48. Share and communicate appropriately with other students
49. Respect their teachers and peers

Sources & Additional Information:

- CA Common Core State Standards: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/>
- <https://www.genieacademy.com/blog/things-your-child-should-know-before-fifth-grade>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/skills-kids-need-going-into-fifth-grade>