ElternMail Berlin

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE START OF SCHOOL!

You already know: For you and your child a new and wonderful stage of life lies ahead. The school begins and brings with it a lot of exciting and new things.

We are looking forward to accompanying you through these exciting times. In this ElternMail regarding the primary school enrolment you will find a lot of answers to your questions. We want to take you along into the world of school and show you how you can support your child during the settling-in period. That is our contribution to making sure children are going to school happily.

Enjoy reading!



Starting school from a children's point of view

"Yay, now I am finally a schoolchild. At times I am anxious because everything is still new. However, I am learning a lot of new things, which is really fun. But sometimes I do not know all the ways yet.

When I come home from school, oftentimes I am very tired. Learning in school is so much fun for me.

Yet I have to be patient sometimes and wait for my turn to answer and additionally, I am expected to sit still.

This is not that easy. Playing during break is cool.

It is amazing to be a schoolchild!"



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The ElternMail for school enrolment is also available in other languages.

Die ElternMail zur Einschulung gibt's auch auf Deutsch.

ElternMail щодо питань зарахування дітей до школи доступний також українською мовою. Okul kaydı için ElternMail Türkçe olarak da mevcuttur.

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PREPARING FOR THE SCHOOL DAY



The evening before each school day

Well-rested children learn with more ease and joy. A primary schoolchild usually needs between 10 and 12 hours of sleep. Please make sure that your child does not have access to media at night. Cuddling and reading together before bed can calm your child and make it easier to fall asleep.

Prepare the **break-time snack** the evening before. It is best to avoid sugar. Sugar causes fatigue and inhibits concentration.

Choose and prepare the clothes for the next day together. This can save you some time in the morning.

Before the child goes to sleep, you can go over the daily routine at school and talk about what your child is looking forward to the most. A nice ritual for the evening is to reflect together on things that were especially great that day or what the child was happy about.

Pack the school bag and check that everything is in it.



Connection, calmness, and tender guidance: In the morning, it is best to plan a little extra time. It is important to stay "close to your child" during the morning and guide them. Children can feel if you are stressed or distracted. This way, you can avoid many arguments and stressful situations, and probably even find the time for a big hug and some kind words! Do not be surprised: Your child may suddenly revert to asking for support with getting dressed. In doing so, they fulfil their need to feel close to you. Guidance for the school: In primary school it may happen that the timetable is not followed precisely. Because the children spend most of the time with their class teacher it can occur that the lessons are allotted in a different way. Therefore, it is quite enough to talk to your child about the special subjects: For sports lessons, for example, they need the sports bag, for art lessons they may need other materials, etc.

Having breakfast together: Breakfast is important because it is the first source of energy in the day. Try to make sure that it is as healthy as possible. Avoid foods with sugar for breakfast.

Healthy break-time snack: Your child needs a lot of energy at school. Fill the lunch box, for example, with vegetables, fruit and a healthy wholemeal bread with cheese. Avoid sweets.

School bag: Packing and carrying the school bag properly

- Complete pencil case with scissors, glue, pencils, sharpener, eraser, ruler, etc.
- Books and exercise books labelled with the child's names according to the subjects on the timetable.
- Unnecessary school supplies remain at home or in school.
- Heavy books and objects are best carried close to one's back.
- The bottom edge of the school bag is supposed to be at hip level when carried.
- Let your child carry their own school bag to promote self-reliance.





THE WAY TO SCHOOL

Children who have just started school often still need to be accompanied. As long as your children are still being taken to school, mothers and fathers can take turns dropping them off and picking them up.

Walking to school in a small group with a parent gives everyone a safe feeling at the beginning and encourages self-reliance. Maybe the children will soon be able to walk the last steps by themselves.

Tips for the way to school:

- Exercise: If possible, prefer walking instead of driving. This promotes concentration, attention, and coordination at school.
- Getting to know the way: Start walking the way to school during the summer holiday from time to time. Talk to your child about possible dangers in traffic.
- Visibility: Especially during the darker months of the year, it is important that your child is wearing bright and reflecting clothing as well as a school bag with reflectors. Bright safety vests are also practical as they increase visibility.
- **Do not go with strangers:** Tell your child that they should never go with strangers or get into a stranger's car.
- Help in case of emergency: Agree on what your child should do in case something happens. For example, is there a shop on the way to school where they could get support? Do relatives or friends live close to their route?
- **Know your own address**: It makes sense for your child to know their own address when they walk to school without being accompanied by an adult. This way, they can ask for directions when in doubt.

- By bike: If your child can ride a bike safely and the traffic on the way to school is manageable, you can of course also ride together to school by bike. Many parents also use cargo bikes as an alternative to a car. In fourth grade of primary school, there will be a bikeriding exam for the children. After that, your child can probably master the journey well on their own.
- By pedal scooter: Pedal scooters are exceedingly
 popular vehicles, especially in primary school. Please
 remember that the road safety of pedal scooters is
 rather poor due to the lack of proper lighting. If your
 child really wants to ride a pedal scooter, accompany
 them at a walking pace.
- By bus & train: If your child needs to travel with public transport it is important that you accompany them at first. If your child wants to ride alone, this should be well practised beforehand.
- By car: If you bring your child to school by car, park near the school and walk the last few steps to avoid dangerous traffic situations right in front of the school.

WHAT YOUR CHILD FEELS AND NEEDS

Sometimes it is hard to say goodbye

Some children just need a little more time to get used to the new situation at school. Many children feel this way and you can give your child the time they need to adjust. You can lovingly support your child!

Maybe your child suddenly cries when you say goodbye in front of the school or does not want to let you go. Sometimes the pain of separation shows at night, when your child wants to sleep in your bed again, or is having emotional outbursts in the afternoon. It's probably awfully hard for you to bear this pain and also your child's tears. You would really like to take the pain away from them, wouldn't you? However, it is not your job to "take away" the pain of separation.

Good to know:

With the start of school, your child experiences the socalled "wobbly tooth puberty" and is taking many developmental steps at once. Suddenly they have their own ideas about life, proudly express their own opinions and want to decide things for themselves. Many children experience strong feelings during this time between kindergarten and the start of school. One moment your child is angry and the next they are happy. Try to accompany your child sensitively and accept all their feelings.

For example: "You're really angry right now, aren't you? You wanted to decide for yourself." Or like this: "You're really happy and excited right now, aren't you?"



 Let the tears, the pain and the anxiety be. Do not judge these feelings negatively so that they do not get amplified further.

Your phrase of encouragement: My child's pain will pass!!

• Examine your own worries and feelings about school so as not to transfer them onto your child.

Your phrase of encouragement: I can have faith!

• Give your child something from you (a picture, a piece of clothing or paint a heart on the hand).

Your phrase of encouragement: My child can do this!

• Together with your child, look for a friend who will go into the school building with your child.

Your phrase of encouragement: My child belongs!

• Stand the pain together with your child and accompany them through their fears.

Your phrase of encouragement: My child will overcome their pain and their fears!

 Give your child a small comforter or a guardian angel for them to take to school, so that they do not have to manage the school life alone.

Your phrase of encouragement:

My child is sheltered and protected.



Balance between co-determination and loving guidance

- 1.In case of an argument, take your child and their opinion seriously and listen to them carefully.
- 2. Treat your child with respect. Sometimes you will make decisions for your child that will frustrate them. Be there for your child in those situations, too.
- 3. Nevertheless, continue to lovingly take the lead in important decisions that your child is not yet able to make
 - Examples: Through your decision-making, you provide your child with enough sleep, an adequate media time and a healthy diet.

Conclusion: Let your child participate in the decisionmaking within a set framework and make sure that your child's needs are met.



"Let me decide and try out things on my own!" (autonomy)

> "Look closely at what I can already do and watch closely how I can do it!" (feeling seen)

"I want to cuddle when I feel overwhelmed by everything!" (closeness)

> "I need your help when I took on too much!" (support)



How you can empower your child for school:

• Show understanding for all feelings instead of giving advice:

Say, for example: "You are so disappointed, because you wanted to play with the others during the break. I know that feeling. What could you do tomorrow during the break to feel less alone?"

- Show your child that you are always there: Say, for example: "No matter what happens in school, you can always tell me everything. We will always find a solution!"
- Let your child try things out and make mistakes: Say, for example: "It's ok to make mistakes at school. I can help you to learn from them."
- Name your own feelings and say what's important to you: Say, for example: "I feel very anxious when your pencil case looks like this. I care about the order in your pencil case, so that you have everything you need to study at school."
- Show your child how to deal with uncomfortable feelings. Say, for example: "Instead of screaming loudly, you can breathe slowly!" "Say STOP loudly, instead of hitting others!"

SUPPORTING THE LEARNING PROCESS LOVINGLY



What's the learning level of my child?

You may be wondering whether your child is skilled enough to start school. Do not worry - for most children, it will get easier after the settling-in period, which can vary in length depending on the child.

- Comparisons with other children are not helpful, as each child develops at their own pace.
- The class teacher will guide the children very closely at the beginning and check whether your child is following
- If the teachers notice that your child needs support, they will approach you directly.
- Try to have confidence in your child's abilities and lovingly support your child to overcome challenges.

This is what learning looks like today:

Project work and project weeks Working in teams learning)

(different types of

Weekly task lists, mathematics conferences and reading competitions (different methods)

Learning on excursions and in study groups ("out-of-school learning")

Structured all-day care:

guidance by teachers and educators during the morning in class and in the after-school day-care in the afternoon

Painting, drawing, learning through movement, handicrafts, shapes and making music (learning with "all the senses")

The learning development at the end of the first school year

Your child's teacher will closely monitor the learning development during the first school year and will certainly contact you in case of any problems. If you are unsure about the development of your child, please feel free to talk to the teacher.

Learning development meetings (LEG [Lernentwicklungsgespräche]): These meetings are conversations between the teacher, you, and your child. Together you will have a look at the learning path so far and set new goals for the next period. Your child has the right to participate in the decision-making process and can also set their own goals this way.

The first school report: At the end of the first school year, most primary schools do not yet issue school reports. Your child receives a written assessment of their learning development.

How are children learning today?

Teaching and learning methods as well as educational paths have changed in recent years. Perhaps you still know the classic front-of-class-teaching from your own time at school. The teacher stands at the front and explains, and in the best of cases, all the students listen attentively. We know now that learning works better if children also do things themselves, if they get enough exercise, if they learn by interacting with other children, and when they are particularly interested in something. Now, more emphasis is placed on supporting children according to their personal strengths.

Homework in a structured all-day school environment:

You may be wondering how much you should help your child with the homework and what your child can do independently. In the structured all-day programme, your child will be accompanied by teachers in the morning during lessons and in the afternoon in the after-school day-care. The supervision of homework is included in the structured allday programme.

Normally, children are not given homework that they cannot complete on their own. If your child does not understand the tasks on several occasions, please talk to the teacher so that they can explain the tasks in more detail, or write them down in the morning - when concentration levels are higher than in the afternoon. If your child has not completed the homework, the teacher will inform you in good time and ask for your help. If your child regularly has difficulty completing the tasks, it may be advisable to see a doctor to rule out problems in hearing, vision, or other health-related areas.

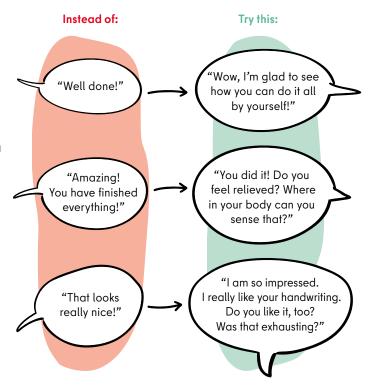
Homework at home:

- At home, a fixed workplace for the homework can help children from the very beginning.
- In reality, this is often not the case, as children seek connection and closeness to their parents while learning. If your child prefers to work at the dining or living room table, make sure the table is set up for this.
- The table should be tidy and the room as quiet as possible so as not to distract your child. If you have other children who want to play nearby at the same time and distract your schoolchild, you might consider getting your schoolchild noise-proof headphones, for example.
- It is a good idea to set fixed times for studying. However, allow your child some time for physical activity, fresh air or rest after school.
- Important: Make sure to be relaxed yourself so that you can calmly support your child doing their homework.



- Before the evening routine, make sure you packed the finished homework into the school bag. For example, put them in a folder so that your child can find them in the morning at school.
- · Ask your child for the parents' folder regularly so that you receive information - including about homework if needed - in good time.
- Help your child to write the homework neatly in a homework book. Colourful sticky notes as a guide can help.
- Before school, remind your child to pack all materials needed for the homework before leaving the
- Guide your child as they complete their homework. However, refrain from correcting mistakes.
- Appreciate your child's effort and refrain from quick praise. In doing so, you can promote your child's motivation and joy of learning.

Examples of appreciation:



AVOIDING REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT

Why you should avoid rewards:

- · Children learn best through their own experiences of failure and success. Positive experiences motivate and inspire.
- If you regularly reward your child with various incentives and material things, a dependency will develop that good behaviour and performance will be followed by a reward.
- In the long run, your child's self-motivation may suffer as they learn to complete tasks only because of the reward.

Conclusion: It is therefore advisable to avoid rewards. Instead, acknowledge your child by talking to them about how they achieved this good performance and what they may have found difficult. By talking to your child, you will show your appreciation and increase your child's motivation.

Why you should avoid punishment:

- · Whenever children get punished for bad behaviour or bad grades at school, they usually do not understand why they should do better next time.
- Children only refrain from the negative behaviour out of fear of the punishment and only if the punishing person is near them.
- · When children get punished, it can even reinforce a negative behaviour because the punishment will get the child some kind of attention, even if it is negative.
- The motivation and joy of learning will decrease and your relationship with the child and the child's self-esteem will suffer.
- Instead, take a quiet moment together to think about how to do things better next time. Show your child exactly what they could say or do next time, for example, when they are angry or frustrated. If you need it, you can get support through parenting groups at the family centre, at school or at the parent and family counselling (EFB).



FOSTERING CONCENTRATION



... it is rarely due to a concentration deficit or disorder. Often, adults are just expecting too much from children at this age.

Facts:

Children in first grade can only focus for a maximum of 10 to 20 minutes at a time. After that, they usually need a short break from learning.

This will only work for a longer period of time if children enjoy a learning task. So think about how you can make learning more fun for your child to help them concentrate.

Potential causes of poor concentration:



Concentration problems can also be caused by various illnesses (e.g., ADHD). A paediatrician may be able to help with concentration problems. If your child suffers from severe concentration problems over an extended period of time, a specialist should rule out physical or mental illnesses.





- · Physical exercises: Jumping, wriggling arms and legs, doing squats, wall-sitting, relaxing hands, singing, dancing etc.
- · Practising tongue-twisters and short rhymes
- Fresh air and physical activity
- · Drinking enough water
- · Eating something healthy
- No media during learning breaks (no audiobooks, phones, tablets etc.)
- Using headphones / ear protection in case of a noisy environment (e.g., siblings playing)
- · Keeping the workspace tidy
- Getting enough sleep
- Walking/running barefoot regularly increases brain activity
- Playful breathing exercises e.g., blowing out an imaginary candle - lying on the back: practise deep belly breathing
- Criss-crossing movements promote the connection between the brain hemispheres, e.g., moving the right knee to the left elbow and vice versa
- Pouring cold water over the forearms or face

READING, WRITING AND CALCULATING WITH JOY

Promoting reading and writing

Immediately after enrolment, the first steps in reading and writing begin.

If your child grows up bilingual or multilingual, there is the possibility of having lessons in their mother language to improve it, which you may have already heard about when registering your child for school. This will preserve your child's bilingualism. If you sign up your child, they will receive additional lessons in the first language and will be able to consolidate their writing and speaking skills in this language.



Support your child with small everyday **writing tasks** (e.g., shopping lists, small letters, lists, writing games).



Your child learns to read and can improve their vocabulary and their spelling if you **read to them in an engaging way** and if they read to you regularly.



- Creating a cosy reading corner with great books
- Organising a reading competition at home
- Books with beautiful pictures
- Reading to a cuddly toy or the grandparents
- Reading short, funny poems or songs and learning them by heart

To promote the reading skills ...

· Take turns reading:

This usually works well from the second half of the first school year.

• 10 minutes of daily reading time:

Regular reading practice helps to enhance the reading learning process.

• Make sure they read aloud:

Reading aloud improves your child's ability to read and write.

• Practice reading comprehension:

Ask your child what they have just read.





Promoting mathematical skills

It can be really fun to do **calculations in your everyday life at home.** These examples of tasks will help your child to learn mathematics along the way:

"Grandma and Grandpa are coming to visit us today. That means we need crockery and cutlery for six people. Can you help me set the table?"

"The neighbour has brought six strawberries from her garden. Can you manage to share them fairly with your sister?"

"Could you please get the egg carton and take out four eggs? We are making pancakes today."

Board games can also be a way to promote a better understanding of mathematics and to train logical thinking along the way. For example, your child has to count the spots on a dice or estimate how many moves are left until the end of the game.

You can support your child, for example, by playing with counting cubes (of 1) and counting rods (of 10). This way, your child can understand that there are 10 times 1 inside a 10. Feel free to ask the teacher which learning material they recommend to practise mathematics at home and where to get the material.

If you notice during the first school year that it is very difficult for your child to understand even simple numbers or quantities, talk to your child's teacher about it. Sometimes these kinds of difficulties can be a first indicator of a dyscalculia.

AND WHAT HAPPENS AFTER SCHOOL?

Your child may stay at school after the school lessons because you are working or because your child wants to stay. Many children enjoy the all-day setting including joint meals, learning and playing together. Other children find it difficult to spend the whole day at school. Most children are quite exhausted in the afternoon. Give your child breaks to rest if needed.

If you would like to get involved in your school's all-day activities (e.g., gardening, holiday care or an afternoon study group), ask the school.

SMARTPHONE, TABLET & CO.

Children are fascinated by media. Make sure you set a healthy limit on media time so that your child's concentration does not suffer and learning at school comes easily.

Tips for media consumption

- Limit media use to a reasonable amount of time: Each child handles media stimuli differently. Watch your child closely. The general guideline for children in primary school is half an hour to 45 minutes but not every day. From the third grade onwards, you can gradually increase the media time to a maximum of 45 minutes on school days and about 60 minutes on non-school days.
- Your child will not need a smartphone in the first grade:
 Your child will not need a smartphone until they have the
 necessary level of media literacy. This is usually the case
 between the ages of 10 and 12. If you want to reach your
 child during primary school period, a simple cell phone
 without internet connection may be a good solution.
- Your child does not need a smartwatch in first grade either: A smartwatch is not necessary either while still in primary school. Smartwatches are also forbidden in many primary schools, because they can cause heavy distraction from learning for many of the children.



- Avoid consumption of screen or audio media right before bedtime: The multitude of stimuli causes anxiety and restlessness and can make it more difficult to fall asleep. Unfortunately, these difficulties are also caused by the popular story-telling audio boxes. Exciting audio plays are not helpful to fall asleep. However, reading aloud before bedtime is a nice ritual that provides the child with a lot of peace and closeness.
- Make sure that your child only watches age-appropriate media content: In Germany exists a system of media labelling (USK and FSK) which is legally binding and thus, appears on all digital media (computer games, films, etc.). This is not a pedagogical recommendation. You should still critically assess whether the content is appropriate for your child.
- Limit audio media: Important: Excessively long audio plays and audiobook times are also not recommended!

FIRST PARENTS' EVENING AND PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION







The first meeting for parents - parents' evening

The first parents' evening is usually exciting. You will get to know the other parents, learn a little more about the teacher and get insights into the routine of your child's school-day.

What will the first parents' evening be about?

- You will get information from the teacher about their impressions of the class, the teaching methods as well as future school trips and project days.
- The parent class representatives will be elected.
- You will find out more about the rules and how you can help at school.
- You will also have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

Why the parent-teacher association is important for children:

- A lot of schools have a support association nowadays.
 It is usually founded and run by parents, teachers, young people, children and other active persons. The schools' parent-teacher associations promote the education and the pedagogical assistance of all children at the school.
- The parent-teacher association is funded by membership fees and donations. Additional income is generated through sales or activities at school festivals.
- In order to be successful and effective, the parent-teacher association needs as much support as possible from everyone.



THE SCHOOL AS A HAPPY PLACE

How you can be involved in shaping the everyday life at school

If you are interested and have the time to get involved in your child's school life, here are some ideas:



Get elected as
parent class representative or get
actively involved in the parent-teacher
association to advocate for
the children.



You could organise a school trip, pitch ideas for a trip or start a school club (AG - Arbeitsgemeinschaft if that is an option at your school (e.g., a music club).



You could accompany the class on school trips or field trips.



You could help to design the playground or the classroom if the teacher is open to this.



Take an active part
in school events so that your child can
see how important the school
life is to you.



Promote self-reliance
on the way to school. Accompany
small groups of school beginners
on the way to school or become
a school crossing guard and help
to make the way to school safer
for the children.

What you can do so your child feels comfortable at school:

- Show your child what you like about school and talk about school and school activities enthusiastically.
 Your child will adopt your attitude towards school unconsciously.
- Talk about the teachers in a positive way, instead of getting upset about their behaviour in front of your child.
 If something bothers you, feel free to get in touch with the teacher and resolve the conflict without the presence of your child.
- Talk to your child about conflicts at school and try to understand together, how the other child felt. This will help your child to understand different points of view.
- Find out about activities such as school clubs (AGs) or projects at the school in order to promote your child's strengths.
- Show interest in the school by actively participating in school life.



PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING

In case you need advice or help at any time:

You are not alone. First, you may ask the teachers or educators who accompany your child for help.

Second, do not hesitate to make use of all the other support services your school may offer. If you feel unsure which support site may be the right one for you, ask the class teacher or call the school office.

You can also get support from the school's social workers who are available at every school in Berlin. They offer, for example, counselling, mediation, open activities, cultural education, support for inclusive approaches or socioeducational group work. You can find out more about the staff and services the school offers on the school's website or at the first parents' evening.

The school family is here for you and your child and looking forward to a cooperation full of trust – to make your child's time at school a happy one!

You can get professional support with, for example,

Questions about the education of your child

Concentration problems

Learning and performance problems (Reading and mathematics)

Fights between children

Fear of school or separation anxiety



INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE OPTIONS

Your child may have special learning needs due to a disability or other characteristics and may need more support than other children. Or, during the first few months of school, you may find that your child learns differently from other children and needs more support.

- In this case, your child's class teacher is always your first point of contact and will be able to give you a lot of information about your child's learning and social development.
- Seek to talk to the teacher at the beginning of the school year and talk to them about your child's special needs.

• Keep in touch with the teacher if you or your child are unsure about anything.

If you are still worried or have further questions, you can turn to counselling centres that are particularly well versed in these topics, e.g., at ...

Eltern beraten Eltern von Kindern mit und ohne Behinderung e.V.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & HELPFUL SERVICES



Kroko educates: Dental health

Kroko is the toothbrushing crocodile who regularly visits kindergartens and schools. The appointments include dental health check-ups and education on good oral hygiene. You can find more information about Kroko and the school visits on the website of the Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Berlin zur Verhütung von Zahnerkrankungen e.V. (Berlin Association for the Prevention of Dental Diseases).

A lot of information is available for download in different languages here:

www.lag-berlin.de

LET'S GET OUT THE CRAYONS!

Here is something to colour in for your schoolchild - have fun!





WELL-SUPPORTED FROM THE BEGINNING

With ElternMail Berlin, the Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family Affairs aims to support and strengthen all parents at the beginning of their family life and along the way. The service, which is free of charge to families, is designed to help mothers and fathers find helpful information on all aspects of their child's development, as well as practical tips and information on local support services.

Further links

If you would like to find out more about starting school, you can also visit the website of the relevant Senate Administration. **The State of Berlin says:**



 www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/schule/bildungswege/ grundschule/#willkommen



For some years now, school children have been able to use public transport in Berlin free of charge. More information can be found on the **BVG website**:

www.bvg.de/de/abos-und-tickets/schuelerticket



If there are problems that cannot be solved at school, the district's **School Psychology and Inclusive Education Counselling and Support Centres**(SIBUZ) are available:

← www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/unterstuetzung/beratungszentren-sibuz

Of course, there are many more contact points and assistance opportunities, in case there are worries or challenges to overcome. You can also find those in the family portal of the State of Berlin. Berlin offers a wide range of activities to experience for your child in their leisure time outside of school, such as children's and youth leisure facilities, music schools or sports clubs, which can be found in every district. You can also get the Berlin Family Pass for joint activities. You can find out where to get one on the Family Portal, too.

← www.berlin.de/familie

Imprint

Publisher

ElternLeben.de - an offering of the wellcome aGmbH

www.elternleben.de www.wellcome-online.de

Supported by Stützrad gGmbH

Funded by





Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Familie

Concept

wellcome gGmbH: Dr. Martina Stotz

Editoria

wellcome gGmbH: Dr. Martina Stotz, Madeline Hoffmann, Sabine Linz Stützrad gGmbH: Katja Brendel, Sabrina Döring

Freelancer: Rebecca Pascual Vega

Coordination of marketing & design wellcome gGmbH: Berit Lohnzweiger

Graphics and Layout wellcome gGmbH: Florian Stuertz

Illustrations

S. 2: Canva (ina9's Images)
S. 15: LAG Berlin e.V. (Detlef Surrey)
Alle anderen: iStock (lemono)

Photo

S. 1: iStock (FatCamera)

Print

Richard Scholz GmbH

1st edition, 1st issue

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