

Get Ready For School

Choosing a Child Care Center for your Preschooler

Selecting appropriate child care for your preschooler can seem overwhelming because as a parent, it is your responsibility to ensure that your child is safe and happy in an environment that is educational, fun and nurturing.

When attending your first interview try to take your child with you if you can.

First Impressions:

- Is the atmosphere warm, welcoming and positive? _____
- You are greeted by the staff while attending to the children at the same time? _____
- Is your child greeted at eye-level? _____
- What is your child's reaction to the center? _____
- What is your child's reaction to the staff? _____
- What is your child's reaction to the other children? _____
- Is the philosophy of the center in tune with your values? _____
- Is the center accredited? _____

The Classroom

- Is the room appealing to children and comfortable? _____
- What ages are catered for? _____
- How many children in each classroom? _____
- What is the ratio of staff member to children? _____

Your Child's Carer

- Who will be the teacher in charge of your child? _____
- How long has this person worked in the center? _____
- What are their qualifications? _____
- What kind of on-going training does the staff receive? _____
- Does the staff interact with the children in a warm and caring? _____
- Does the staff interact with the children at eye-level? _____
- How is discipline handled? _____

What will your child be doing?

- Is the environment happy? _____
- Toys & Equipment:
 - Are there enough? _____
 - Are they in good repair? _____
 - Are they age appropriate for your child? _____
 - Are they within easy reach for your child? _____
- Is there a daily schedule including:
 - Indoor and outdoor activities? _____
 - Quiet and active times? _____
 - How large are the group activities? _____
 - Will your child have free time? _____

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- Are there field trips?
- How is transportation handled?
- How is supervision on field trips handled?
- How much time is spend on TV and/or computer games?
- How much time is spent resting and where is this done?

Safety

- What first-aid and CPR certificates does the staff have?
- Will someone with these qualifications be on duty at all times?
- Are the exits clearly marked?
- Are child safety gates installed on all exits?
- Does the center have regular safety checks by local authorities?
- Does the center have fire or emergency drills regularly?
- Playground:
 - Is the playground properly fenced?
 - Is there enough room for all the children?
 - Is the equipment in good repair?
 - Is the equipment age appropriate?
 - Is there sufficient shade or shelter?
 - Is there water provided?
 - Are the children required to wear hats in the playground?

Health

- Is the center clean?
- Does the center smell clean and fresh?
- Is food properly stored?
- Are the washrooms clean?
- How is toilet training handled?
- Are soap and towels provided and within easy reach of children?
- Are children instructed to wash their hands regularly?
- What is the policy regarding ill children? Are they separated from other children?
- How are medications handled?
- How often are diapers changed (if relevant)?
- Where is this area? Is it away from food prep and storage area?
- Is there running water nearby?
- How are the toys and equipment cleaned and disinfected?
- How often is this done?

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Mealtimes

- Does the center provide meals or do you? _____
- Is there a refrigerator and microwave available? _____
- What meal times are there? _____
- If the center provides meals are they appealing and nutritious? _____
- How does the center accommodate allergies or special diets? _____

Parental Involvement

- Are parents encouraged to be involved with programs or activities? _____
- How often are parent-teacher conferences scheduled? _____
- How does the staff communicate with parents on a daily basis? _____
- Does the center have a Parent handbook? _____
- Does the center have references? _____

Payment Policy

- Does the center have a contract? _____
- What days and hours are available for your child? _____
- What are the fees? _____
- When are the fees due? _____
- Is the center closed for holidays or any other days? _____
- Will you be required to pay for the days your child is absent? _____
- What happens if you are late collecting your child? _____
- How much notice do you need to give when leaving the center? _____

Follow-up

Do you instinctually feel good about the center? Trust your instincts.

Check the references.

Check with your local authorities to see if there have been any complaints made about the center.

If any complaints, are they valid and how have they been handled by the center's management?