

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Historical Materials from University of
Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

Extension

1989

G89-928 Parent Checklist for Choosing Day Care

Herbert G. Lingren

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist>



Part of the [Agriculture Commons](#), and the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#)

Lingren, Herbert G., "G89-928 Parent Checklist for Choosing Day Care" (1989). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 574.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist/574>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Extension at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.



Parent Checklist for Choosing Day Care

Choosing appropriate child care can be confusing. Here are some things to consider in selecting the best care for your child.

Herbert G. Lingren, Extension Family Life Specialist

- [What Is Good Day Care?](#)
- [What type of caregiver would be best?](#)
- [Is the setting suitable?](#)
- [What will the cost of care be?](#)
- [In-home Care](#)
- [Family Day Care](#)
- [Center-based Care](#)
- [A Checklist for Parents](#)
- [Find Out About the Day Care Regulations in Your Area](#)

What Is Good Day Care?

Good day care requires three important things: *a caregiver* who provides your child with care and guidance and who works with you and your family to make sure your child grows and learns in the best way possible; *a setting* that keeps your child safe and healthy; *activities* suited to your child's stage of growth that help the child develop mentally, physically, socially and emotionally.

Consider these questions as you choose day care:

What type of caregiver would be best?

A good caregiver should be well-trained, and warm and loving toward children. Whether your child is an infant, toddler, preschooler, or school-aged, the caregiver should encourage the child's interests and stimulate the child to explore and discover new things. When you interview caregivers you'll want to find out about their training and experience, and their attitude toward child rearing, guidance and discipline.

Is the setting suitable?

Whether you use in-home care, family day care, or center care, the facilities should be safe and healthy.

Equipment--games, toys, and furniture--should be in good repair and appropriate for your child. The number of children in your child's group should be small enough to allow your child to receive individual attention.

What will the cost of care be?

Day care costs vary widely, depending on the type of care you use, the days and hours you need care, the part of the country you live in, and other factors. Investigate the costs of different kinds of day care available, including the costs of transportation for your child to and from the day care setting. Find out if your family qualifies for local, state or federal financial assistance to help pay for care of your child.

The checklist for parents will help you decide what kind of day care arrangement will provide your child with good quality care in a suitable setting, at a cost you can afford. Any kind of day care can be good for your child if the care provides the warmth, supervision and individual attention your child needs.

You may want to use more than one kind of care for your children--perhaps in-home care for your infant and family day care or center-based care for your preschooler.

In-home Care

An in-home caregiver is someone who comes to, or lives in, your home. The caregiver can be a relative or friend, or can be someone you pay to come to your home.

If you have three or more children needing care, in-home care may be less expensive than other kinds of care. It also can save you from the worry of getting several children, all with different schedules, to and from a day care arrangement outside your home.

You may want to use in-home care if your child needs special care because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem; if you need care for an infant or toddler, or care for a child at night; if you need only after-school care.

You should know, however, that in-home care can be costly, especially if you have only one or two children and are paying someone for full-time care.

Family Day Care

This kind of day care is provided in the home of the caregiver, who is often a mother with children of her own. You may find a relative, friend or neighbor willing to care for your child in this way. Or you may find a family day care home run by someone you do not already know.

Usually just a few children are cared for at any one time. In Nebraska, family day care homes care for eight or fewer children. State law *requires* registration when four or more children are cared for from different families. Registration is with the State Department of Social Services. Group day care homes must be licensed and have an assistant. They can provide care for 9-12 children.

Family day care can be a good arrangement if you are a single parent raising a child alone; if you live in a rural area where family day care is likely to be easiest to find; if you have only one or two children needing care; if you have a school-age child or an infant.

Keep in mind that a family day care provider may go out of business or stop caring for children at any

time. Because many of these homes are not registered and inspected by the Department of Social Services, it is up to you to make sure adequate health and safety standards are met.

Center-based Care

Day care centers are established settings where children are cared for in a group away from their homes for all or part of the day. There are many different kinds of center-based care, including preschools and parent cooperatives. Some of these centers are set up primarily to keep children safe and secure. Others are designed to prepare children for their school years. Center-based care is most frequently available in a town or city.

Many day care centers have an organized program of activities to help children learn. Some centers follow more formal plans. Others use a more informal program based on their day-to-day experience in working with children.

You may be interested in center-based care if you want to keep your child in the same day care setting for an extended period; if your child needs special care because of a physical or mental handicap or an emotional problem; if you want certain educational or religious activities for your child; and if, in addition to care, your child needs medical or dental checkups, or psychological or social services.

Keep in mind that center-based care may not provide the "home" atmosphere some children like. Your child may not be comfortable in a large group for a major part of each day.

In considering a particular day care center, check out the facilities available, the qualifications of the staff, and the number of children cared for by each caregiver (the "staff/child ratio"). In Nebraska there should be at least one staff person for every four children ages six weeks to 18 months. For 18 months to three years, the ratio should be one to six; for three to four years old, one to 10; for four to five years old, one to 12; and for kindergarten and up, one to 15.

Talk to the director to make sure the center's program has the approach you like, and includes the kinds of activities you want for your child.

A Checklist for Parents

This checklist is designed to help you decide what things about a day care arrangement are most important to you and your family. It can help you make sure your child's arrangement offers the things you believe important.

Arrange to visit the center or home when children are present. You also may want to visit when you are not expected.

Read through the checklist and circle those items you want the day care site to provide. Then, when you talk to a possible caregiver or visit a home or center, decide whether the arrangement offers those things. Just check "yes" or "no." Use the checked-off list to help you make a decision.

Remember, this checklist tries to be as complete as possible. Not everything will apply to your family's situation.

Does A Prospective or Current Caregiver:		
For all Children	Yes	No
Appear to be warm and friendly?		
Seem calm and gentle?		
Seem to have a sense of humor?		
Seem to be someone with whom you can develop a relaxed, sharing relationship?		
Seem to be someone your child will enjoy being with?		
Seem to feel good about himself or herself and the job?		
Have child-rearing attitudes and methods similar to your own?		
Treat each child as a special person?		
Understand what children can and want to do at different stages of growth?		
Have the right materials and equipment on hand to help children learn and grow mentally and physically?		
Patiently help children solve their problems?		
Provide activities that encourage children to think things through?		
Encourage good health habits, such as washing hands before eating?		
Talk to the children and encourage them to express themselves through words and language?		
Have art and music supplies suited to the ages of all children in care?		
Seem to have enough time to look after all the children?		
Help each child know, accept, and feel good about himself or herself?		
Help each child become independent in ways you approve?		
Help each child learn to get along with and respect other people, no matter what their backgrounds?		
Provide a routine and rules children can understand and follow?		
Accept and respect each family's cultural values?		
Take time to discuss the child with the parent?		
Have previous experience or training in working with children?		
For Infants or Toddlers (birth to age 3)	Yes	No
Seem to enjoy cuddling each baby?		
Care for each baby's physical needs, such as feeding and diapering? Wash own hands frequently?		
Spend time holding, playing with, talking to each baby?		
Provide stimulation by pointing out things to look at, touch, and listen to?		
Provide dependable and consistent care so each baby can form an attachment and feel important?		

Cooperate with parent's efforts to toilet train the toddler?		
"Child-proof" the setting so each toddler can crawl or walk safely and freely?		
Realize toddlers want to do things for themselves and help each child learn to feed and dress him- or herself, go to the bathroom, and pick up his or her own toys?		
Help each child learn the language by talking with him or her, naming things, reading aloud, describing what she or he is doing, and responding to each child's words?		
For Preschoolers (aged 3 to 5 or 6)	Yes	No
Plan many different activities for children?		
Join in activities himself or herself?		
Set consistent limits that help each child gradually learn to make his or her own choices?		
Recognize the value of play and encourage each child to be creative and use his or her imagination?		
Help each child feel good about himself or herself by being attentive, patient, positive, warm and accepting?		
Allow each child to do things for himself or herself because she or he understands children can learn from their mistakes?		
Help each child increase his or her vocabulary by talking with him or her, reading aloud, and answering questions?		
For School-Age Children (aged 6 to 14)	Yes	No
Give each child supervision and security but also understand his or her growing need for independence?		
Set reasonable and consistent limits?		
At the same time, allow each child to make choices and gradually take responsibility?		
Understand the conflict and confusion that growing children sometimes feel?		
Help each child follow through on projects, help with homework, and suggest interesting things to do?		
Listen to each child's problems and experiences?		
Respect each child when he or she expresses new ideas, values or opinions?		
Cooperate with you to set clear limits and expectations about behavior?		
Understand the conflicts and confusion older school-age children feel about sex, identity, and pressure to conform?		
Provide each child with a good adult image to admire and copy?		
Does the Day Care Home or Center Have:		
For All Children	Yes	No
An up-to-date license or registration certificate?		
A clean and comfortable look?		
Enough space indoors and out so all the children can move freely and safely?		
Enough caregivers to give attention to all of the children in care?		

Places to store personal belongings?		
Places children can play quietly?		
Enough furniture, play things, and other equipment for all the children in care?		
Equipment and materials suitable for the ages of the children in care?		
Enough room and cots or cribs so the children can take naps?		
Enough clean bathrooms for all the children in care?		
Safety caps on electrical outlets?		
A safe place to store medicines, household cleaners, poisons, matches, sharp instruments and other dangerous items?		
An alternate exit in case of fire?		
A safety plan posted to follow in emergencies?		
An outdoor play area that is safe, fenced and free of litter?		
Enough heat, light and ventilation?		
Nutritious meals and snacks made with food you want your child to eat?		
A separate place to care for sick children where they can be watched?		
A first aid kit?		
Fire extinguishers?		
Smoke detectors?		
Covered radiators and protected heaters?		
Strong screens on windows above the first floor?		
For Infants or Toddlers (birth to age 3)	Yes	No
Safe gates at tops and bottoms of stairs?		
A potty chair or special toilet seat in the bathroom?		
A clean and safe place to change diapers, sanitized after each use?		
Cribs with firm mattresses covered in heavy plastic?		
Separate crib sheets for each baby in care?		
For Preschoolers (aged 3 to 5 or 6)	Yes	No
A stepstool in the bathroom so preschoolers can reach the sink and toilet?		
For School-Age Children (aged 6 to 14)	Yes	No
A quiet place to do homework?		
Appropriate games and activities?		
Are There Opportunities:		
For All Children	Yes	No
To play quietly and actively, indoors and out?		
To play alone at times and with friends at other times?		

To follow a schedule that meets young children's need for routine but is flexible enough to meet the needs of each child?		
To use materials and equipment that help children learn new physical skills and to control and exercise their muscles?		
To learn to get along, to share, and to respect themselves and others?		
To learn about their own and others' cultures through art, music, books, songs, games and other activities?		
To speak both English and their family's native language?		
To watch special programs on television that have been approved by you?		
For Infants or Toddlers (birth to age 3)	Yes	No
To play with objects and toys that help infants develop their senses of touch, sight and hearing? (For example, mobiles, mirrors, cradle gyms, crib toys, rattles, things to squeeze and roll, pots and pans, nesting cups, different sized boxes)		
To take part in a variety of activities suited to toddlers' short attention spans? (For example, puzzles, cars, books, outdoor play equipment for active play; modeling clay, clocks, boxes, containers, for creative play)		
For Preschoolers (aged 3 to 5 or 6)	Yes	No
To play with many different toys and equipment that enable preschoolers to use their imaginations? (For example, books, musical instruments, costumes)		
To choose their own activities for at least part of the day?		
To visit nearby places of interest, such as the park, the library, the fire house, a museum?		
For School-Age Children (aged 6 to 14)	Yes	No
To practice their skills? (For example, sports, musical instruments, drama activities, craft projects)		
To be with their own friends after school?		
To do homework?		
To use a variety of materials and equipment, including art materials, table games, sports equipment, books, films and records?		
To use community facilities such as a baseball field, a swimming pool, a recreation center?		

Find Out About the Day Care Regulations in Your Area

In Nebraska, all day care centers must be licensed. Family day care homes caring for four to eight children must be registered. Group day care homes that care for nine to 12 children must be licensed.

For information on Nebraska's day care regulations contact the Day Care Licensing Consultant, Department of Social Services, P.O. Box 95026 Lincoln, NE 68509. They can provide information about registered day care and licensed group homes, licensed preschools, and licensed day care centers.

Adapted from *Parent Checklist for Daycare*. Pm-796h, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University, December,

1985.

File G928 under: FAMILY LIFE

B-2, Preschool

Issued June 1989; 7,500 printed.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Elbert C. Dickey, Director of Cooperative Extension, University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension educational programs abide with the non-discrimination policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.