

Starting Child Care: Child Care 2¹

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Figure 1.
Credits: Jupiter Images

Many parents have suffered the heart-wrenching moment of dropping their baby at a new child care setting, only to have them cling and cry.¹ If your child is starting child care, you can help make the transition easier by following a few guidelines from child development experts to help you and your child prepare for this change (American Academy of Pediatrics, n.d; Zero to Three, n.d.).

After you have selected your child care, visit the caregiver several times with your child. If possible, leave your child for short periods of time to begin to get used to these new surroundings and to learn to trust these other caring adults. Increase the time in care gradually, especially if your child hasn't been apart from you before. This may make the transition less stressful for you as well (Zero to Three, n.d.).

You and the caregiver are partners now in the care of your child, so help the caregiver to get to know your child. If possible, pick a setting that matches your child's style and ways of doing things (Zero to Three, n.d.). Although it may not be an easy transition, good communication can help! "Show your child that you like and trust the caregiver" (AAP, n.d.). Relax, talk, and laugh together. It's even okay to call from time to time, especially in the first few days while you and your child are adjusting to new routines.

When your child enters child care for the first time, "You are likely to experience a range of emotions about separating from your child and about sharing [his or] her care with others" (Zero to Three, n.d.). Be aware of your feelings and be certain to take care of yourself during this time of change.

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It's not unusual for some children to be upset when left with strangers, especially from 10 to 18 months of age. This is the peak period of separation anxiety, when a child doesn't understand that even though you have to go for some period of time, you will still come back (American Academy of Pediatrics, n.d.). Younger infants, up to seven months, adapt to caring adults and usually have few problems adjusting to child care.

References

American Academy of Pediatrics. Separation anxiety. [Accessed June 6, 2006] http://www.aap.org/pubed/ZZZ-V10M9H4C.htm?&sub_cat=1

Zero to Three. (n.d., a). I'm going back to work and sending my 12-month-old to day care. I'm worried that she'll have trouble adjusting. How can I get her ready? [Accessed June 6, 2006] http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ter_key_childcare_childcare&AddInterest=1152

Zero to Three. (n.d., b). Matching your infant's or toddler's style to the right child care setting. [Accessed April 18, 2012] <http://www.zerotothree.org/early-care-education/child-care/matching-your-infants-child-care-setting.html>