



Adjusting to Child Care

What you can do to make the adjustment go a little smoother.

You & Your Child

Placing your child in child care can be a difficult adjustment for you and for your child.

You will probably be concerned about leaving your child. That is natural. You are responsible for your child's care and healthy development, so it can be difficult at first to hand some of that responsibility to another person.

You may feel guilty about doing that. Many parents do.

Your child may have some difficulty adjusting to the idea that you are leaving and that he or she has to stay with other people. Many children do.

In most cases, the first few weeks of child care are the hardest. You and your child will need time to get used to the new routine.

But most parents and children make the adjustment without too much trouble. With a little preparation, support, and patience you can too.

On Back

What you can do to make the adjustment go a little smoother.



A publication of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development made possible with help from the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund For Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education.

For more Parenting Guides and other information, visit the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development on the Internet at www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/familyissues/guides

You & Your Child may be reproduced for non-profit use only.

Child Care: How to make the adjustment go a little smoother

Choose your child care carefully

Nothing will give you more peace of mind than knowing your child is being cared for in a safe, enriching environment by people you trust.

Before deciding on a child care service, ask friends and relatives for advice and recommendations. Visit and talk with the people who will be caring for your child. If you are considering a center, take a tour. Are the children happy? How does the staff interact with the children. Do you see any safety problems?

Knowing you chose carefully will help ease the adjustment to placing your child in the care of others.

Talk to your child

If your child is old enough to understand, talk to him or her about going to child care. Point out that child care can be fun. Talk about the ways it will be different and the ways it will be the same as being at home.

Involve older children in preparing for change

Children 3 years old or older are able to understand more about why they will now be attending child care. If your child is old enough, have him or her help prepare for the change.

Have your child help make a list of things the caregiver should know. For example:

- If your child is going to a center, a list of his or her favorite activities and toys may help the child feel comfortable.
- If the caregiver will be watching your child in your home, have your child help make a list of where the phone, fire extinguisher, and other items are located. Also, give the caregiver on a tour of the house.

Take it slowly

Get your child used to child care gradually. If you are able, spend the first few days with your child in child care. A 1 or 2 hour visit will do. This will help your child explore the new setting with the security of knowing you are around.

You might also try placing your child in care part-time for a few days.

If a new caregiver will be caring for your child in your home, introduce the new caregiver gradually with you around at first.

Reassure your child

If your child is old enough, talk about how he or she feels about child care.

Let your child know that it is okay to miss you. But always reassure your child he or she will be all right, and that you will always return.

Limit other changes

When your child starts child care, it is best to limit the changes he or she is going through.

Moving to a new house, for example, or trying to potty-train your child at the same time he or she is starting a new child care arrangement may make the adjustment more difficult.

Don't sneak away

When you leave, it is better to say goodbye, even if it means your child will cry.

Make the goodbye a warm, but quick one, and reassure your child that you will be back later. Then go, even if your child is crying.

