Step 3: After you visit

For each program, look over the items that you marked with a ✔ to see the good points. Also, read the items that you left blank to see what is not in the program.

- look at what the program has to offer
- see what is missing
- think about fees, location, and hours open
- decide what is best for you and your baby

If you are not happy with any of the programs that you visited, then you may want to try another program. Trust your own judgment and feeling about a program. You know your baby best and can tell which program will be right for your family.

Your baby’s earliest years are important. Child care does make a difference…

- in how happy your baby is now
- in how your baby’s brain grows
- in how well your baby will do in the future

Choose child care carefully. By choosing quality child care now, you can give your baby a good start that will last a lifetime.

The University of Nevada Cooperative Extension faculty who prepared this checklist hope it helps you find high quality child care. For information, contact one of these offices:

Western: (775) 784-4848  
State: (775) 784-7009  
Central/Northeast: (775) 423-5121  
Southern: (702) 222-3130

Prepared by Sally Martin and Dan Weigel  
University of Nevada Cooperative Extension
Step 1: Find out first

Begin by visiting several child care programs. Call first to make an appointment. On each visit, go through the entire checklist, and give each program an overall score. Stay as long as possible so you can get a good feel for what the care will be like for your baby. Even after you choose a program, go back to check it out from time to time.

- Write down the name, address, phone number, and contact person for each program you will visit.

1. 
   (name)
   (address)
   (contact person)

2. 
   (name)
   (address)
   (contact person)

3. 
   (name)
   (address)
   (contact person)

- When making an appointment to visit, find out if the program is licensed.
- Write down what days/hours the program is open.
- Write down what fees are charged.
- Is the location easy for you to reach?
- Find out what the policies are regarding sick children. Does the program provide care for sick children? Will they call you if your baby gets sick when you are not there?
- Then, visit and fill out the checklist for each program. See checklist on the next pages.

Step 2: Here are 30 things to check out

Some checklist items can be seen, but you will need to ask about others. Check if you see ✔; leave blank if you don’t see/can’t tell □

Check out the Caregivers/Teachers:

Caregivers greet each parent and baby warmly; help baby separate by talking about parent leaving, encourage parents to spend time with baby and say good-bye before leaving.

Caregivers frequently talk with each baby about what the baby is doing and encourage babies to talk.

Caregivers interact warmly with babies during playtime and play with babies as babies play with toys.

Caregivers hold and pat babies.

Caregivers are gentle, use pleasant voices, smile frequently, and help babies who are hurt or upset.

Caregivers frequently talk with each baby about what the baby is doing and encourage babies to talk.

Caregivers interact warmly with babies during playtime and play with babies as babies play with toys.

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Caregivers hold and pat babies.

Caregivers are gentle, use pleasant voices, smile frequently, and help babies who are hurt or upset.

There are enough caregivers present to meet each baby’s needs with little crying or waiting.

There are at least one caregiver for every 3-4 babies. If you can’t tell, ask, “How many babies does each caregiver take care of?”

There are no more than 9 babies in a group with several caregivers. If you can’t tell, ask, “What is the maximum number of babies in a group?”

Ask, “Does at least one of those caregivers stay with this group of babies for at least a year?”

Ask, “Do caregivers have a certificate or degree in child development, early childhood education, or infant care (CDA, AA, BA/BS)?”

Parents are asked to evaluate the program at least once a year. If you can’t tell, ask, “Do parents have the opportunity to evaluate the program and if so, how and how often?”

Caregiver score: total number of ✔’s

Watch the Care Routines:

Diapering area is cleaned and disinfected after each use.

Different sinks are used for food preparation and diapering clean-up.

Feeding area looks clean and sanitary.

Caregivers place babies on their backs to sleep. If you can’t tell, ask, “How are the youngest babies, who can’t turn over, placed in their cribs?”

There are individual cribs for each baby present with firm, tight fitting mattresses.

Caregivers place babies on their backs to sleep. If you can’t tell, ask, “How are the youngest babies, who can’t turn over, placed in their cribs?”

There are individual cribs for each baby present with firm, tight fitting mattresses.

Routines score: total number of ✔’s

Look at the Setting:

There are some soft rugs and other soft areas where children can play with supervision.

Babies who are not crawling or walking have a variety of safe places to play, including open floor space.

There are toys and equipment to encourage safe crawling, walking, climbing, pushing, pulling, and ball play. Furniture and toys will not tip over when babies are trying to pull themselves up.

There are low, open shelves where babies can get safe toys.

Toys and equipment are in good repair with no sharp edges, splinters, or loose small parts.

There are many kinds of toys and activities for babies like books, dolls, blocks, rattles, tubs to fill and pour out, and toys to push or pull.

Vinyl or hard page books are available for babies to get on their own.

There are comfortable places where adults, including nursing mothers, can sit and hold babies.

The center is clean.

Detergents, cleansers, medicines or other dangerous items are kept out of reach or locked up.

There is evidence of a written emergency or disaster plan.

Setting score: total number of ✔’s

Overall Impression:

Look over your checklist. Think about this program. Is this a place where your baby will be safe and happy? Overall, how would you rate each program on a scale from 1 to 10? Write your overall score in the boxes for each program.

Terrible place Wonderful, excellent place for a baby

Overall Rating Scores