Choosing the right kind of child care is one of the first important issues a new parent faces.

65%

of American women with children under age 6 are in the workforce, compared to 30% in 1970.

Their child care choices follow:

22% are cared for by a parent, including the mother who stays at home.
21% are cared for by a grandparent or other relative.
25% are cared for by a non-related child care center.
28% are cared for by other non-relatives, including nannies and in-home child care.
3% have other arrangements, or no regular arrangement.

Pros

Nanny: In-home care is more convenient than out-of-home care. More Flexible than child care centers and home child care situations.

Cons

More personal attention. Can care for one baby, not a whole group. More flexible than home child care and home child care situations.

Children stay in familiar surroundings.

Home child care: Parents like this choice because they want to keep their children in a home-like environment and think their children are happier and healthier in smaller groups.

Nurturing home-like atmosphere.
Smaller groups of children than at larger centers.
Less expensive than most other child care ($450 per month for infants, $200 per month for toddlers).
Kicks socialize with children of same or different ages.
Children stay in familiar surroundings.

More personal attention. Can care for one baby, not a whole group. More flexible than home child care and home child care situations.

Child care centers: Parents choose care centers because they believe they are safer and more secure.

Cons

Most expensive child care option ($300 to $700 a week)
No personal supervision.
Playtime with other children must be arranged separately.
Extensive paperwork and taxes.
Home is hard to establish with a relative.

Parents also like that their children will be safer and feel more secure at home. They feel more flexible and convenient, and they feel it is economical.

Less expensive than most other child care ($450 per month for infants, $200 per month for toddlers). Children socialize with children of same or different ages.

More affordable than nanny care ($330 to $850 per month).
Reliable (can’t call in sick).
Ample supervision.
Kids socialize with children of same or different ages.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Can you or your spouse afford to stay home with your child? It is also important to ask what you’d be happiest doing.
2. How much can you afford to pay?
Nannies are usually most expensive, in-home child care least.
3. How flexible is your schedule?
Child care centers and preschools usually have set drop-off and pick-up times.
4. Does your company offer a child care center, allow you to bring your baby to work with you, or let you work at home?
This benefit allows you to continue working and still be near your child.
5. Do you have relatives nearby that can help?
Many parents prefer relative care, especially with infants, because they know this caregiver best.

YOUR FINANCES, YOUR CHILD’S NEEDS AND YOUR OWN SCHEDULE Will determine who cares for your child while you are away.
No matter what type of child care you choose, the quality of care is much more important than the type of care.

What type of child care is best for my situation? (Your finances, your child’s needs and your own schedule will determine who cares for your child while you are away. No matter what type of child care you choose, the quality of care is much more important than the type of care.)

Preschools are licensed and regulated by the same bodies as child care centers, but are usually more curriculum-based. Nanny or relative care may be less regulated. A half hour before the center opens, preschool is definitely an option. The cost is about the same as a center.

ACTION ITEMS

TIP

Spend time carefully investigating your child care options, beginning about six months before you need it. If possible, start early!