

Five Tips on Choosing a Preschool



Cost and convenience are important when you choose a preschool for your child. But other factors can also make a program a “good fit” for your family. These tips can help you find a high-quality preschool program.



Ask about the teachers.

- What education and training do they have to work with this age group?
- Is the staff stable, or does it change often? Low staff turnover usually helps children feel more secure.
- How many children are there for each teacher? Two staff members should be assigned to a classroom of 20 preschoolers.
- Do the teachers understand and respect the needs of each child? They should be welcoming, friendly, and aware of children’s differing strengths, interests, needs, cultures, and heritage languages.



Ask about the program.

- Does it offer a variety of ways for children to play and learn, with a balance between individual and group activities?
- Is there time for active play, both outdoors and indoors? Children should not have to sit and listen to the teacher for a long time.



Look at the classroom.

- Do all indoor and outdoor areas seem safe? Is the noise level generally comfortable?
- Does the room look inviting, with separate spaces for looking at books, playing, and participating in group activities? You should see building blocks, toys, puzzles, games, art supplies, print materials, and items for pretend play.
- Are children’s work and family photos carefully displayed on walls and bulletin boards?
- Is there a comfortable space where a child can calm down away from the crowd?



Observe the children.

- Do most of the children seem happy and absorbed in their activities most of the time?
- Do teachers apply classroom rules fairly and consistently? Teachers should clearly tell children what behavior they expect.



Find out how families can be involved.

- Do teachers discuss children’s progress with families informally and at scheduled times?
- Are family members welcome to visit the classroom, or to volunteer?



For other Web resources, see “Five Tips on Choosing a Preschool” at <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/>

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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