



GUIDE TO TYPES OF CHILDCARE

- ✓ Conquer diapering in a back seat. Check.
- ✓ (Almost) fitting back into pre-pregnancy jeans. Check.
- ✓ Circle return to work day on calendar. Check.
- ✓ Make suitable childcare arrangements. Che - er, huh?

There is a whole secret world full of big words like “Montessori” and titles like “nanny employer” that you’re expected to not only know the meaning of, but also which choice is best for you. You can ask ten people and get ten different answers, all of them laced with double meaning and personal agendas. What to do? Where do you go? Well, start here for one thing. Bookmark this page before you embark on the quest for childcare. Keep reading for the low-down on all the options - with no biased opinions; just the plain facts.

Some of us are lucky enough to have built-in childcare, like grandma, or another relative, or even a trustworthy neighbor. If you don’t have this, and you are going outside of your circle of family and friends for childcare, you have a plethora of options. It can be difficult to figure out which is best for you. We at MomCheck focus primarily on standard “daycares,” but you are certainly not limited to that option! Since we want to help you find the right childcare for you, regardless of the type, we’ve put together this document to help you in your search.

There are 2 basic types of childcare: In-home and center-based. Here’s the breakdown of what you can expect in each since they can contain so many sub-types:

1. In-Home Childcare

a. In your own home

- i. **Nanny:** A nanny takes care of your child(ren) in your home, usually while you are at work. Nannies are often considered “part of the family.” There is no “qualification” to be a nanny, though there are many agencies and schools that “train.” If you hire a nanny on your own, you become an employer and must pay wages and taxes, and may also provide benefits like paid time off and health insurance. To learn more about your responsibilities as a nanny employer, [visit the IRS website](#). (You can also hire through an agency and pay the agency instead.) There are two types of nannies.

1. **Live-In.** This is a nanny that lives with your family. You provide room and board in addition to salary. Living in, though, does not mean your nanny is available to you 24/7. You must still honor working and non-working hours. As you provide living arrangements, this option is sometimes less expensive than a live-out nanny.
2. **Live-Out.** This is a nanny that does not live with you and comes to your house to care for your children at the designated times.
3. **Nanny Share.** This may be a live-in or live-out nanny. In this case, you and another family decide to “share” the services of a nanny. You may decide to have a nanny watch your children three days a week and another child the other two, or you may have the nanny watch both your child and another child at the same time. A nanny share





may help reduce the cost of a nanny, but it requires some flexibility both on the part of the nanny and the family with which you share the nanny.

- ii. **Au Pair:** An au pair is a single person from (usually) a European country who is participating in a work-program to come to the U.S. and learn English. There are very strict guidelines for their use as child caretakers. For example, they may not be able to work more than 5 hours a day. They usually do not have any experience in childcare and therefore are a very unsuitable match for your child's primary caretaker. (That's a blanket statement - of course there are always exceptions.) But, if you do not work outside the home and are just looking for an extra pair of hands, this may be a good option for you. While we don't directly endorse any particular Au Pair agency, the [Au Pair USA](#) website provides a wealth of information.

- b. **Outside your home:** These are still called "In-home," but actually refer to a childcare center that is run in someone's personal residence as opposed to a commercial building. Within this category, there are many options. In-home providers may or may not be governed by state regulations, depending upon the number of children and type of application filed. The following definitions are from the [Texas state website](#).
 - i. **Listed Family Home:** A caregiver who is at least 18 years old that provides care in her own home for compensation, for three or fewer children unrelated to the caregiver, for at least four hours a day, three or more days a week, and for more than nine consecutive weeks. The total number of children in the care of a listed family home, including children who are related to the caregiver, must not exceed 12 at any given time.
 - ii. **Registered Family Home:** A caregiver who provides care in her own home for four to six children, birth to 14 years for less than 24 hours a day. Child day care can be provided for six additional school-aged children before and/or after the customary school day. The total number of children in care, including children related to the caregiver may not exceed 12.
 - iii. **Group Day-Care Home:** An operation that provides care for seven to twelve children, birth to 14 years for less than 24 hours a day.
 - iv. **Unregistered/Unlisted In-Home Provider:** This is someone who has chosen to care for children in his or her home and has not applied for any status from the State. Generally, this will be a neighborhood mom who cares for a few other children besides her own whom she already knows.

2. Center-Based Childcare

- a. **Childcare Facility (also called Daycare, Childcare Center).** This is what we traditionally think of when we hear the word childcare or daycare. These are facilities that are governed by state licensing regulations. Generally, care is provided to children from about 6 weeks of age to 12 years. They are typically open Monday through Friday, with operating hours from about 6:00am to 6:00pm. (There are, however, facilities that are open on the weekends and overnight.) Capacity for the facilities can run from 20 to 400. There are a few categories of childcare facilities worth defining further.

- i. **Chains:** Childcare facilities that have more than one location, locally, regionally, or nationally, and that are owned by one corporation. Policies, procedures, and image are consistent.
 - ii. **Franchise:** Childcare facilities that are individually owned and operated, but do business under a chain name. Policies and procedures are consistent with other franchises under the chain name. (Some corporations have both chains and franchises.)
 - iii. **Individual:** Childcare facility that is individually owned and operated that is not affiliated with another childcare facility.
 - iv. **Corporate-Sponsored:** Childcare facility that is available for use solely for a corporation's employees. This type of facility may still be part of a chain, but enrollment is limited to corporate employees. These facilities are typically located on the site of the sponsoring corporation.
- b. **Drop-in Care Center:** Facility that provides for drop-in care and usually operate 7 days a week with extended hours. Children can stay at these facilities for a few hours or a full day. Parents are not typically required to call ahead to reserve a spot, but there is a registration process to use the facility. These facilities are not traditionally used as full-time childcare - they are more geared to accommodate stay-at-home moms who need someone to care for their children occasionally. While these facilities still must comply with all state regulations, they generally do not serve meals or follow a set curriculum.
- c. **Mother's Day Out:** Usually not an actual center, these are predominantly programs run by churches that offer a 2 or 3 day childcare program for children under 6 and follow the school year calendar. Hours are generally from about 9:00am to 2:00pm and are intended for use by stay-at-home moms who need to tend to family obligations, want to help socialize children who have not previously been exposed to childcare or simply need a break.
- d. **Preschool.** Can be a stand-alone facility, or can also refer to the program at a childcare facility. It is an early childhood program in which children focus on learning through play. The age range is most commonly three to five, with Preschool serving as the immediate predecessor to Kindergarten. In a standalone facility, the Preschool program can be full-time, part-time, half days, and other combinations. There are many different varieties of Preschool. We've separated out a few of them here.
 - i. **Private Preschool:** These are typically standalone facilities with a heavy emphasis on education and curriculum. Children generally must be "accepted" into a private preschool by application, affiliation, testing, or other methods. In some areas, the competition to get into a "good" preschool is fierce and parents will put their children on the waiting list two and three years in advance.
 - ii. **Public Preschool:** A growing number of states have started to fund preschool programs offered at public schools, called pre-kindergarten (or pre-K) programs. They may be administered by the local school board or by an independent contractor paid by the state. Like private preschools, they may operate for a full day or just half a day.
 - iii. **Head Start:** A federal program that provides free education to preschool age children from low-income families. They are available in every state, operate on full or half days, and can be a stand alone center or operated from a



- public school. To learn more about this program, visit the [National Head Start Program](#).
- e. **Montessori School:** Named after Dr. Maria Montessori in 1907, this actually refers to a method of learning based on Dr. Montessori's observations that children learn at their own pace. A Montessori facility is in fact a school, and traditionally serves ages 3-12 (though there is a Montessori method for birth through 3). The emphasis is on learning through all five senses. Schools can be accredited through several Montessori organizations. The hours of the school can mimic those of a traditional school, or those of a childcare facility. There can be vast difference between individual schools. For more information on Montessori schools, visit [The International Montessori Index](#).

So, there's a basic overview of childcare options. Now, how do you decide which is right for you? We encourage you to research, research, research! Ask questions from everyone you can - stranger or not. Many moms try several different methods before finding the one that best suits her family. And a growing number of families are creating their own hybrid solutions using a combination of many of the above. We think all options are viable, and all options can be good. Take all advice with a grain of salt, though, and make the decision that is best for you and your family. If you are considering a childcare facility as your childcare option, we invite you to see how a [MomCheck search](#) helps narrow your choices. We help you work *smarter*, not *harder*, in finding childcare.

And go try on those pre-pregnancy jeans again. We think you look pretty darned good!



About MomCheck: [MomCheck](#) is an innovative, unbiased resource that provides parents with a better, more efficient and smarter way to shop for childcare. [MomCheck](#)'s knowledgeable agents evaluate facilities in person, publish reports of these tours and deliver in-depth information on all licensed childcare facilities in an easily accessible online database.