

# Matching Your Infant's or Toddler's Style to the Right Child Care Setting



America's most trusted child care resource.

1-800-424-2246

[ChildCareAware.org](https://www.ChildCareAware.org)

This brochure offers some guidelines on how to use what you know about your infant or toddler–like personal style and activity level–to select a child care setting that’s just right.

The questions below can help you develop a profile of your child and learn more about the type of care that might best meet your child’s needs.

## What is your child's *personal style*?

Pick the one that describes your child most of the time.

### **Adaptable**

- » Flexible
- » Approaches new people/situations with ease
- » Good with transitions

*Look for: Large group settings providing social interaction and new experiences*

### **Cautious**

- » Thoughtful
- » Approaches new people/situations cautiously
- » Has difficulty with transitions

*Look for: Small group settings that are less overwhelming*

### **Feisty**

- » Passionate, feels things intensely
- » Has difficulty controlling strong feelings, wants and needs

*Look for: Programs where each child has a primary caregiver–someone who knows and understands your child (Note: All children benefit from this, but especially children who are passionate and persistent)*

## How does your child *react to the world*?

**Big Reactors:** Communicates feelings and does not hold back!

*Look for:* Caregivers who respect your child's emotions but help your child to express them in a more controlled way

**Low Reactors:** Fusses very little, plays quietly and sleeps a lot.

*Look for:* Caregivers who gently introduce new activities

## How *active* is your child?

**High Activity:** Is always on the go.

*Look for:* Individual schedules, safe exploration and physical play

**Low Activity:** Sits quietly, explores through eyes and ears.

*Look for:* Caregivers who engage children in sensory-rich activities

## Is your child *tolerant of changes and challenges*?

**High Tolerance:**

- » Is not bothered by changes
- » Is adaptable
- » Copes well with frustration

*Look for:* Mixed-age settings that offer enjoyable challenges and stimulation

**Low Tolerance:**

- » Is sensitive to changes
- » Gets upset when daily routine is altered
- » Is easily frustrated, impatient

*Look for:* Same age settings with developmentally appropriate toys and activities



## How *social* is your child?

### **Super Social:**

- » Enjoys approaching new people
- » Is happiest interacting with others

*Look for: Opportunities for group play*

### **Take It Slow:**

- » Is shy around strangers
- » Needs time to warm up

*Look for: Programs that allow children to choose when they would like to play with others*

## What are your child's *unique needs*?

### **Sleep**

*Look for: child-friendly settings offering:*

- » Individual schedules
- » Separate sleeping areas
- » Appropriate lighting (dim), temperature (comfortable) and noise level (low)

### **Cultural Identity**

- » Are staff interested in your family's culture?
- » Do staff speak your home language or find effective ways to communicate with you about your child?
- » Are staff open to including books and other aspects of your child's culture?
- » Are staff's values and practices consistent with your family's?

### **Special Needs**

- » Are staff enthusiastic about working with your child?
- » Do staff understand the medical and therapeutic procedures and assistive technology necessary to support your child?
- » Are staff trained and supported to work with children with special needs?
- » Is the setting accessible to your child?
- » Do any books/toys feature children with special needs?
- » Are staff willing to help your child develop the skills that match what your family believes are important?

# Health and Safety Issues to Consider

Quality child care providers make health and safety issues a top priority. Use the questions below as general guidelines, and contact Child Care Aware® for more information (1-800-424-2246).

- Are diapering, sleeping, food preparation and play areas separate?
- Are there clearly written sanitation procedures specific to each area? Are instructions posted about proper diapering and food storage/preparation procedures?
- Do staff receive training on health and safety issues?
- Are infant and toddler toys washed and disinfected regularly?
- Is there a policy for sick children?
- Do adults regularly conduct safety checks of all areas inside and out for potential safety hazards?
- Do staff maintain children's personal grooming standards (for example, hand-washing)?
- Are all infants put to sleep on their backs?
- Is the staff equipped with appropriate first aid materials? Do staff members know basic first aid techniques (for example, CPR)?
- Do staff practice fire drills and evacuation procedures? Is there a written policy in place for evacuation procedures?
- Has a satisfactory criminal history background check been conducted on each adult present?
- Has the program been inspected by the licensing agency within the last 12 months?



# Responsive Child Care Issues to Consider

Among the items we have discussed, there is one common thread: the need for caregiving staff to adapt *their* approach to meet your child's needs. This is called *responsive care*. To be responsive, caregivers need to be excellent observers of the children in their care and search for the meaning behind children's gestures, gurgles, cries and glances. Responsive caregivers wonder *why* a particular behavior is occurring, come up with an educated guess, and interact with the child to see if their guess is correct. Is a crying baby tired? Hungry? Wet? Lonely? Frustrated?

Responsive caregivers adapt their responses based on the reason behind the behavior as well as *the style of the individual child*. This ensures that all children are treated as unique, with their own thoughts, feelings, preferences and needs.

- Are infants and toddlers allowed to function on individual schedules?
- Do parents receive daily written reports about their children's day (and formal progress reports twice a year)?
- Are parents free to visit at any time during the day?
- Does the caregiver adhere to state-regulated adult to child ratios and group size?
- Is the caregiver turnover rate under 20 percent? Why do caregivers leave?
- When caregivers leave, how do staff help children understand the transition?
- Do staff receive medical benefits, vacation leave and continuing education support?
- How do caregivers respond to child-initiated interests?
- How can parents get involved in the program?
- If you are nursing, is the caregiver responsive and accommodating?



Adapted from the following ZERO TO THREE publications:

- *Learning and Growing Together: Understanding and Supporting Your Child's Development* by Claire Lerner and Amy Laura Dombro (2000).
- *Caring for Infants & Toddlers in Groups: Developmentally Appropriate Practice* by J. Ronald Lally et al. (1995).

Child Care Aware® is committed to helping parents find the best information on locating quality child care and child care resources in their community. In partnership with Child Care Resource & Referral agencies (CCR&R), Child Care Aware® builds consumer awareness and supports families in making choices for the care and education of their children.



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For additional resources or help finding your local Child Care Resource & Referral agency (CCR&R), call:

**1-800-424-2246**

**TTY Line: 1-866-278-9428**

**ChildCareAware.org**

For local information contact:



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