

FIRST DAY TIPS

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Plan to spend extra time getting to work and child care. Pack your child's supplies the night before so you will not be rushing in the morning. Rushing adds stress and shortens tempers. You want your child to have a happy start to the day. It makes leaving him or her easier for both of you.

Plan to stay a while the first several mornings. Have another person your child knows stay if you cannot. When it is time for you to leave, say good-bye, give a last hug, and leave directly. Your child may cry at first. This is normal. Usually the tears last for a brief time, six to 20 minutes. Check on your child by phone later.

Plan shorter days for your child to be away from you. Pick him or her up after the morning session first, then after lunch, then after nap, and finally have your child stay the whole day. Perhaps a grandparent or friend your child knows well can help if you cannot pick him or her up early.

Call if you will be late picking up your child. Tell your child if you know you will be one of the last parents to pick up your child every day. Your child can learn to look at the clock and know it is not time to go home yet. Suggest the provider play a game, read to, or do a special activity with the last few children.

Try not to be in a rush to go home. Your child may want to show you some things he or she has done. Do not be surprised if your child acts angry or unhappy to see you, or wants to stay longer. Your child is telling you that he or she needs time to get ready to leave. You can show that you think this is a good place to be by spending time there, talking to the teachers, and visiting with other parents. Meet your child's friends, play with your child for a while, then go home.

Remember to Take on the First Day:

- Your child's comfort item (blanket or stuffed animal).
- Change of clothing and extra sweater.
- Health forms and immunization records.
- Family picture for his or her cubby or crib.
- Phone number where you can be reached.

- Child care phone number (with you).

REFERENCES:

Donegan, M. et al., "Making the Transition to Group Care," *Exceptional Parent*, February 1995, pp. 29-31.

Powell, D. R., *Strengthening Parental Contributions to School Readiness and Early School Learning*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Educational Resources Information Center, 1991.

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Tweedie , P.S. (1996). "First day tips." In Beginning Child Care: CCA 126. Stillwater, OK: Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service.