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

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

**Feisty**
- Passionate, feels things intensely
- Has difficulty controlling her strong feelings, wants, and needs

**Look for:**
- Large group setting providing social interaction and new experiences.
- Small group settings that are less overwhelming.

Adapted from the following zero to three publications:
- Caring for Infants & Toddlers in Groups: Developmentally Appropriate Practice by J. Ronald Lally et al. (1995)
Is your child tolerant of changes and challenges?

High Tolerance children:
- Aren’t bothered by changes
- Are adaptable
- Cope well with frustration

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

Low Tolerance children:
- Are sensitive to change
- Get upset when daily routine is altered
- Are easily frustrated, impatient

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

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 accommodating your child?
- Do staff understand the medical and therapeutic procedures and assistive technology necessary to support your child?
- Are staff trained and supported to accommodate 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 are ones that also 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 there instructions posted on proper diapering and food storage/preparation procedures?
Do staff receive training on health and safety issues?
Are infants’ and toddlers’ toys washed and disinfected regularly?
Is there a sick-child policy?
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?

Responsive Care

Among the items we’ve 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 do so, 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 they’re 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.