

What does a high-quality program for toddlers look like?

How do you know if a child care program is a good fit for your toddler? The right early learning program will keep your child healthy and safe while working to support their learning and development each and every day. This resource will give you information and tips on what to look for when selecting high-quality care for your toddler.

Parents are their child's first and most important teachers, and early learning professionals play a big role as well. Caregivers in high-quality early learning programs understand that infants' and toddlers' brains are growing quickly. They have knowledge and training on how to provide nurturing and stimulating experiences that support development from the earliest months into the preschool years.



High-quality programs use developmentally appropriate practice. This means caregivers provide challenges that are not too hard or too easy. It also means that when caregivers choose materials, activities and strategies to use with toddlers, they think about:

- the physical needs of toddlers to move and be active
- the individual needs and interests of the children
- ways to support every child's family and culture

High-quality programs see families as partners. This means they communicate regularly with families and respect what they want for their child.

Finding the Right Fit

Each child is different, and it's important to remember there is no one-size-fits-all approach to caring for a toddler. You know your child best, and it is important you use this knowledge when evaluating your child care options. Look for a program that will support and value your child's style while also providing responsive care to each child.

While each program might look a little different, some elements stay the same for all high-quality toddler environments. Here are a few things to look for:

- **Secure open spaces (both indoors and outdoors).** Children have many opportunities for active play. The play equipment is safe and challenging for toddlers.
- **Personal touches.** There are objects, such as family photographs and children's artwork, in the room that are familiar to each child. They should be placed low enough for toddlers to see.
- **Simple, interesting materials.** Toddlers use their senses to explore materials, so there should be objects to bang and make noises with, sand to scoop and playdough to squeeze.
- **Child-size furniture.** Chairs, tables and shelves are sturdy, safe and the right size for children so they can be more independent.
- **Diverse books.** Caregivers read simple stories to children and provide sturdy board books for toddlers to look at. The books reflect the children's languages, cultures and families.