

TYPES OF CHILDCARE

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OPTION	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE	PROS	CONS
AU PAIR	<p>A young woman from another country who helps with childcare in exchange for room and board. There is usually an educational requirement attached to their visa.</p> 	<p>▶ A former colleague and his wife (originally from Germany) chose au pairs to supplement their parenting. They chose German au pairs to help with their children's language acquisition and have had 5 different 19-23-year-old women living with them for the last 8 years.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ She lives with you, and this provides a lot of flexibility. (you need to have a spare room) ▶ She can be like a new big-sister for your children. ▶ There's a cultural exchange element to your childcare, which could include a foreign language and a tie to another part of the world. ▶ She is young, which usually correlates to a lot of energy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ She lives with you, so there is always someone there. ▶ It's kind of like having a foreign exchange student in your home, only you're asking them to watch your children. ▶ Au pairs change every year or two; variety can be good, but frequent change can be hard on children as they attach to one caregiver or another. ▶ Language comprehension can be an issue, and dealing with a teenager (who is living in a foreign culture) can also be a challenge. 
DAYCARE (IN HOME)	<p>A woman who watches several children in her house; she usually has separate play areas, maybe even a separate kitchen, for the daycare.</p> 	<p>▶ I still remember "Ms. Betty" from my childhood. She had a huge swing set, a pool, and a few of my friends went to her house to play on weekdays. It turns out, that was home daycare.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Multi-age groups, so children have the opportunity to learn with and from others who are older and younger than them. ▶ Feels ""homey,"" and it is usually run by a motherly/grandmotherly type. ▶ There are typically state laws governing home daycares so you'll get some of the structure you'd find in a daycare (CPR/First Aid certified, adherence to sanitation laws, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The caregiver to child ratio can be higher than ideal (AAP says it shouldn't be higher than 3:1 for infants under 12m), but in my observation, home daycares often try to maximize their numbers. ▶ The caregiver is less likely to have formal training or ongoing education. ▶ The caregiver likely has a very established style, so you'll need to find one that fits with yours rather than expecting her to change. 
DAYCARE (TRADITIONAL)	<p>A classroom-type environment, where there are usually several caregivers with several children. This is what people generally picture when they think "daycare."</p> 	<p>▶ My friends takes their 3-year-old and 1-year-old to the same building and drops them off in different classes. Their girls get to see each other during outside time and lunch.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The facility is established; they have everything they need for watching children. ▶ The caretakers can be like a room full of aunts. ▶ Your children get exposed to variety: everything from children from different homes, to outings to local parks, to germs building their immune system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ It can feel institutional. ▶ There's little room for difference in philosophy. ▶ The days tend to be very structured, with scheduled activities; not as much room for extended play. 
NANNY	<p>You hire one woman to work in your home and watch your children.</p> 	<p>▶ A woman I know through a professional association has had the same woman working for them for the last 9 years, since their oldest was a few months old. She's basically a part of their family now.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The care is in your home, so it keeps children's days simpler and your day as well (no packing meals, getting kids into the car or train, etc.). ▶ Your children get to form a bond with one person ▶ You set the hours. ▶ Depending on the age of the children, the nanny might be able to pick up other tasks you wouldn't have access to in a daycare, such as getting the children dressed, maybe doing laundry, etc. ▶ You can have a greater influence on how the children are interacted with at your home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There's just one person watching your children; if they're sick, or running late, you're in a bind. ▶ Finding that one person can be really hard. ▶ It could be one of the more expensive options (once you get to multiple children, it seems to be about the same cost as daycare in a city). ▶ They may-or-may not have formal training. ▶ Managing someone who watches your children is different than managing people at work; it's more nuanced and more personal. ▶ There is the potential for class/race issues in a way that doesn't come up as strongly in a daycare setting. ▶ You have to adhere to the laws governing nannies, such as taxes, unemployment insurance, etc. It's confusing the first few times, and it's an added level of work" 
NANNY SHARE	<p>You enter into an agreement with a neighbor(s) (usually a family who has a child of a similar age) to hire someone to watch your children collectively. You can make the agreement as formal or informal as you like.</p> 	<p>▶ In our neighborhood, this is quite common. There are 2, 3, or 4 families who join together for a share, and it can almost start to look like a home daycare (but does not have the regulations supporting it).</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All the same pros as a nanny, plus: You have a built-in playmate or two for your child (if the kids get along). ▶ The share may shift locations (2 weeks at your place, 2 weeks at theirs) and that can provide something different (maybe they have a dog, and you don't). ▶ By sharing a nanny, you decrease the cost to each family. ▶ It can be fun and comforting to have another family at the same stage as you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All the same cons as a nanny, plus: You have to find a style match. ▶ You are mixing parenting styles with another family. ▶ It can lead to friction when, for example, one family wants their child to nap more, another family wants their child going to activities ▶ The schedule has to be matched with another family's schedule, which leaves less wiggle-room ▶ The swapping of locations, set-up/take-down can get tiresome (having 3 pack-n-plays in your living room, for example)." 
ALTERNATE SCHEDULES	<p>Parents/spouses work alternate shifts (at least to some degree) to allow for the children to be with a parent most/all of the time.</p> 	<p>▶ A friend works a typical office schedule, while her husband, who works in IT, was able to get an evening shift. They are able to only have their children with a babysitter 3 hours a day between their schedules.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ This increases the time each parent gets to spend with your children (as opposed to them being in daycare most of the day, or only with one parent primarily while the other one works) and eliminates or limits the time your children spend in the care of another person. ▶ Greatly decreases the financial cost of childcare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ This can be hard on a marriage. You've arranged your schedules so that you primarily see the children and not each other. ▶ You'll have to be intentional to spend time with one another. ▶ It's only possible if one of you works something other than the standard 9-5 schedule; you likely couldn't do this if you and your spouse both work corporate jobs. 
FAMILY	<p>One of your family members watches your child(ren) while you work, or maybe a few days of the week.</p> 	<p>▶ A family friend watches her 4 grand children, 2 days/week for each family.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ It's someone you know ▶ It should be cheaper (or free!) depending on your family member's circumstances ▶ Your child gets a close bond with someone in your family ▶ They may be more accomodating than a daycare or a nanny" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There can be unspoken expectations about things like money, where you'd like your child watched, how you'd like your child watched. ▶ It can be hard to communicate when there are things you would like changed. ▶ It's not just a professional relationship on the line, not just a personal relationship, a family relationship. 
PUBLIC OPTIONS	<p>Starting at age 3 or 4, local municipalities may offer some sort of public pre-school.</p> 	<p>▶ Washington, DC has universal Pre-K for 3 and 4 year olds. You aren't guaranteed a slot in your neighborhood, but you will get a slot somewhere in the city.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ It's free. This seems to be the biggest driver for parents I talk to. It's not that they want their child in school at a young age, but they can't see paying for childcare when there's a free option available. ▶ It's an opportunity for children to develop their social skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ It is likely to be structured much like a school, with lesson plans and outcome-based activities ▶ As much as schools may promise a play-based curriculum, it's still curriculum, and you need to recognize that your young child will be in an academic environment. ▶ The better schools are in the more affluent neighborhoods: if you live in those neighborhoods, you may have a hard time getting a spot and if you don't live near a good school, you'll likely feel conflicted about sending your child to a less-than-stellar school. 
COMBINATION	<p>Some combination of the earlier described situations.</p> 	<p>▶ A woman I met through church sends her daughter to a play-school 2 mornings/week, and has her in a nanny share 3 mornings/week while she works part-time.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ If you can find the right combination for you, this can be ideal with just enough of the right types of care, but not too much. It may be a compilation of less-expensive options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There are a lot of logistics to juggle, such as which day are they where, do you have more than one child who needs alternate arrangements, etc. ▶ Some places are not set up for part-time (ie: a regular daycare) so it can be hard to secure. 