



Starting Childcare? Nervous? Worried? Not sure what to take or what to expect?

Here are some tips to help you settle your child into Childcare for the first time.

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Sending your child to Childcare for the first time can be a daunting thought. It can be an anxious feeling for everyone in the family when you realise you need to leave your child for what could be the first time since they were born. The good news is you are not the first one to experience these feelings and nor are you going to be the last. I'm here to tell you there are ways to make the first days easier. Here are some tips you might want to follow to make the transition into Childcare easier.

1. Plan

A few months or weeks before you start childcare, have a good chat with your Centre about your expectations. Ask them as many questions as you need to. Meet the Room Leader and Educators that will be looking after your child and organise some Orientation sessions to transition your child into Childcare slowly. If your child is old enough to understand conversations, start talking to them about what will be happening and the range of activities and exciting things they will do at Childcare. Answer their questions open and honestly.

2. Orientation

If your Centre allows Orientation sessions, take advantage of these and organise some a couple of weeks before you start your Childcare. Even if it is for an hour or two, see if your child can spend some time in the room they will be in and the Educator that will be looking after them. Talk to the Educator about your child's routine and what works in relation to settling, eating, etc. Spend some time in the room with them at first and then slowly leave them in the room and stay nearby (the staff room or parent room if they have one). This will give you a good indication of what might happen on the first day. If the centre allows for it you could also send your child in for shorter days initially until you feel comfortable.

3. The First Day- Organisation is the key!

On your first day make sure you are organised and not rushing around. A great idea is to have a checklist so you can go through it every day before leaving,
Here are some tips for the day:-

- Make sure you have everything ready; the water bottle, a spare change of clothes packed, nappies if needed, a favourite toy or blanket to help settle your child and formula if needed. Make sure everything is labelled.

CHECKLIST it if you need to!

- Arrive early so you can help settle your child into the day.

- Try not to act overly anxious or stressed- you don't want these feelings transferring across to your child.



-When you arrive, find an activity that will help settle your child and join in for a few minutes if you can.

-When it is time to go, say goodbye (without tears) and let your child know you will be back to collect them at the end of the day.

-Say your goodbyes and confidently walk out.

DO not linger around or start crying.

DO not sneak off, this will only create anxious drop-offs for the future.

- If your child starts crying it is probably best to continue walking out. Children generally settle shortly thereafter and by walking back in you will only start the process of anxiety and risk upsetting your child again. Once you get to the car, home or work give the Centre a call and ask how your child is. In most circumstances the children will settle quite comfortably.

-Don't feel like you can not call throughout the day to check in on your child especially for the first few days. Educators are generally happy to take your call and let you know of any progress.

-Collect the child when you said you would collect them. Talk to the Educators on pick up and ask about your child's day and their interests.

Take them home and ask them questions if you can. Begin to establish a routine and continue to explain to them what will be happening- what days will be a Childcare day, etc.

4. Difficult Drop Offs.

Of course, this is the last thing any parent/guardian wants when dropping off their child. It can be a traumatising time for everyone involved but it is important to remember it can improve and there are ways to minimise the difficulty. The above steps will help you minimise any difficulties. Remember, organisation, explaining to the child what is happening, engaging in an activity, no sneaking off but rather a confident goodbye and allowing them to have something that will help settle them like a blankie, etc will all help in minimising the difficult drop-offs.

If you are finding the Difficult Drop-Offs are not improving after a few days, try to see if your partner, grandparents or friend could drop them off instead to see if the anxiety still exists without you there. Talk to the Educators to see if there are any issues happening throughout the day that could be causing your child to have increased anxiety about being left at care.

Continue communicating to everyone involved. Your child, the Educators your partner.

5. After the First Day

So, you have got through the first day...what next? It's important to maintain a routine with the children. Don't make any sudden changes. You want to instil a sense of security into your child.

Continue with the above steps and maintain an open line of communication.

We are sure there will be many wonderful experiences from Childcare!