

# Childcare in England





## Childcare in England

There is childcare available for children aged from birth to five years and for school aged children.

It is regulated and inspected by Ofsted. You can find information about Ofsted inspection results online <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>. The Ofsted gradings are: Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate.

There are several different types of childcare to suit a variety of needs.

### From birth to five:

- Childminders
- Day Nurseries
- Private Nursery Schools
- Pre-schools and Playgroups
- Local authority nursery schools and classes
- Independent schools
- Nannies

### For school aged children:

- Breakfast clubs
- After school clubs
- Holiday clubs
- Childminders

Find childcare in your area: <https://www.gov.uk/find-free-early-education>

## Choosing childcare

### Things to check:

- The hours that childcare providers can provide childcare
- The hourly, daily, and/or weekly cost
- If they have a place available for your child

### Visit and see!

It's a good idea to visit several providers you like and ask questions in person about the childcare provided. It might help to take a friend and/or your child on the visits to help you decide.

### Questions you can ask:

- What is the ratio of staff to children? How many children do you care for?
- What qualifications and/or experience do you have?
- What are the daily routines and how can you incorporate my child's and other children's routines?
- Who would be my child's Key Worker?
- What are your policies on managing children's behaviour?
- Do you provide meals, snacks, nappies, etc. or will I need to provide them? Is this included in the price or an additional cost?

### Things to look out for:

- Trained and experienced staff, ready to learn and respond to your child's individual needs
- Busy but relaxed children who seem happy
- Safe and clean premises - welcoming and friendly with outside play space
- Cultural sensitivity and responsiveness to children's home life
- A staff team and group of children who reflect local ethnic and cultural groups
- Fun activities planned each day - childminders, nurseries and out-of-school clubs all need to plan their days with children's interests and enthusiasms in mind
- Planned exercise and quiet times to relax are important
- A big welcome for you and your child.

You have to pay for childcare, but there are some free childcare entitlements and financial help available. The government Childcare Choices website <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk> provides details of the entitlements and help available to support families with the cost of childcare:

- 15 hours for eligible two-year-olds
- 15 hours for all three and four-year-olds
- 30 hours extended entitlement for eligible three and four-year-olds
- Tax Free Childcare
- Tax credits for childcare
- Universal credit for childcare
- Childcare vouchers through your employer (open to new applicants until October 2018)
- Support while you study

You can check what help you could get with childcare costs and find out which options work best for you financially <https://www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator>

## 15 hours free childcare

### Age 2

- For families in England receiving some forms of support
- From 1 January, 1 April or 1 September following your child's 2nd birthday
- You must apply to your local council <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>
- If eligible, you're entitled to 570 hours of free childcare a year to use flexibly. This is commonly taken as 15 hours each week over 38 weeks of the year (term-time) or approximately 11 hours each week of the year.

### Age 3 & 4

- Universal entitlement - for all families in England
- From 1 January, 1 April or 1 September following your child's 3rd birthday
- No application required
- You are entitled to 570 hours of free childcare a year to use flexibly. This is commonly taken as 15 hours each week over 38 weeks of the year (term-time) or approximately 11 hours each week of the year.

## 30 hours free childcare

### Age 3 & 4

- For working families in England
- From 1 January, 1 April or 1 September following your child's 3rd birthday until your child starts school
- An extra 570 hours of free childcare a year to use flexibly in addition to the Universal entitlement (1,140 hours total).
- This is commonly taken as 30 hours each week over 38 weeks of the year (term-time) or approximately 22 hours each week of the year.

**15 hours**

Universal entitlement  
for all 3 & 4 year olds  
**No application required**  
570 hours per year



**15 hours**

Extended entitlement  
for working families  
**Application required**  
570 hours per year



**30 hours  
FREE  
childcare**  
(1,140 hours  
per year)

- You must apply for 30 hours free childcare  
<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-and-education-for-2-to-4-year-olds>
- There are application deadlines in place:

If a child turns three between:	You must get a code in place from HMRC before:	If you want your child to start 30 hours free childcare from:
1 April to 31 August	31 August	1 September
1 September to 31 December	31 December	1 January
1 January to 31 March	31 March	1 April

- If your child is already accessing their universal entitlement, 30 hours free childcare cannot begin until the period following successful application:

Application made and code issued by HMRC between:	Earliest start date for 30 hours:
1 April to 31 August	1 September
1 September to 31 December	1 January
1 January to 31 March	1 April

- If you are eligible, you will receive an 11-digit code. You must give this to your childcare provider.
- To keep your 30 hours free childcare, you must sign into your childcare account every three months and confirm your details are up to date  
<https://www.gov.uk/sign-in-childcare-account>

## Tax Free Childcare

- If you are a working parent with children under 12 (or 17 for disabled children), you can open an online account to pay for registered childcare.
- The government will top-up the money you pay in, for example, for every £8.00 you pay in, the government will add an extra £2.00.
- You can receive up to £2,000 per child. If you have a disabled child you can receive up to £4,000 per child.
- You must apply online for Tax Free Childcare  
<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/tax-free-childcare>.  
You can apply at the same time as applying for 30 hours free childcare.

## Starting school

- All children in England are offered a place at school from the September following the child's 4th birthday.
- All children must legally be in school the term following the child's 5th birthday.
- You must apply to your local council by the deadline  
<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

## How to apply for 30 Hours Free Childcare and Tax Free Childcare

Use the joint application for both Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours Free Childcare. Follow the steps opposite to get the most out of your childcare account and to access your 30 hour code.

