

# Choosing The Child Care Option Best For You And Your Kids

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In a previous article, we listed the many [child care options available for work at home parents](#). Of course, the type of babysitting service that is right for you will be determined by your needs and schedule, the needs and schedule of your children, and your budget. This article will talk about some of the options and things to consider when determining if it is right for you.

## Your Schedules

The first thing to consider is how many hours in a day or week you will need to have the kids out of the house. Factors to consider here are if your children are in school or preschool, on any sports teams, or involved in any other extra curricular activities. There is no point in paying for a childcare service if you are already paying to have them at a lesson! You might, however, need to find someone who can get them to their activity.

Next, think about what your schedule is like. If you typically work a forty hour week and keep regular business hours, then you will likely have to use one of the childcare options that you will have to pay for. Childcare centers, family day cares, nannies, the services of an au pair, and babysitters are the options open to you. If you happen to have family living in town or a friend who can take the kids for you and does not expect to be paid, so much the better, but with grandparents getting younger and younger this option is not open to many parents.

If you have a flexible schedule or are able to work around distractions, then you might want to consider looking after the kids yourself, or trying out the options of a babysitting co-op. Older kids are also a great help, but if they are in school and their younger brother or sister is not, you can only expect them to help out for a few hours each day.

Your schedule is probably the most limiting factor with your babysitting options.

## Your Budget

The next factor to consider on deciding the right childcare program for you will be your budget. As you probably realized above, if you are looking for a regular service without having the time to return favors, then you are probably going to have to foot a bill. How big a bill will be determined by the type of service you choose. Nannies are probably the most expensive choice, as you have to pay them like a full time employee. Au pairs come second, and they also come with contracts which state the number of hours and times when they will work. Next come the big day care centers and family day cares. Both charge similar prices in similar areas, usually at a per child rate (they often offer a discount for multiple children). However, day care space is very limited, and as a result day care providers may ask for commitment fees; even if you do not need their services for a day or week, you will be expected to pay for your spot to be held. Babysitters offer the most affordable and the most flexible option, and there are a lot of babysitters to be found.

There are also a lot of free childcare options, but there is always the idea that you will have to return the favor. Relatives and friends are usually more than willing to take a child on both to do you a favor and for the opportunity to visit with them. Babysitting co-ops are great too, but you will be expected to fulfill your end of the bargain. Ply dates are also free, but again plan to return the favor.

## **What Do You Want For Your Kids?**

Finally, consider the type of environment you want for your kids. Do you want them to be around a lot of other children? The opportunity to socialize can be great, but daycare facilities are the first place any type of bug is going to hit. If you choose a facility that makes meals, make sure they are aware of any allergies your child has and also know what types of meals they are going to make. Babysitting co-ops may mean that your children are subjected to the bad influence of people whose parenting style is very different from your own.

Babysitters, nannies, and au pairs may provide the best options, along with friends and family. These child care options can be left with a plan for what you want your children to do during the day, what types of food they should be eating, and specific information on each child. Larger centers will have a hard time filling all the instructions for every child under their supervision.