

Preschool director/teacher interview sheet

Name: _____

Learning center: _____

Daycare or School

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Start looking for a **good preschool** *before* you need one. Parents who wait too long often discover that the school they think is best is already too full to admit their child. Visits can be as short as 15 minutes and as long as an hour — the more time you can spend, the better. Use these questions to guide your search.

Be sure to click on "printable version" in the yellow box at the top of the page to get a clean, easy-to-use copy of this interview sheet to take with you.

► **Basics:** A good **preschool** has solid, up-to-date credentials, clear rules and regulations, and firm policies on operating hours, pickup and drop-off times, and when children are too sick to attend.

1. About the school

- How long has the preschool been in business? _____
- What are the school's accreditations? _____

2. Enrollment

- What is the school's licensed capacity? _____
- Do you have space for my child? yes / no
If not, can we get on a waiting list, and how long is it?

- Does my child have to be potty-trained to attend? yes / no
- Can I bring my child in for a pre-enrollment visit? yes / no

3. Days and hours

- What are your hours? _____
- What's your holiday schedule? _____
- On what other days is the preschool closed? _____
- How flexible are you with pickup and drop-off times?

4. Costs

- What are the fees? _____
- Do you offer scholarships or sibling discounts? yes / no
- Is there a late-pickup fee? yes / no
- Do I pay when we're on vacation? yes / no
- How and when would you bill us? _____

5. Interacting with parents

- Do you encourage visits from parents? yes / no
- What do you expect from me as a parent?

- How do you communicate with parents? Is there a regular newsletter, or a notice board? Is there a daily report or other process for informing parents of what children did during the day (naps, BMs, snacks, etc.)?

- Do you encourage parent/provider conferences? yes / no

► **Size:** Look for a preschool with small groups of children and plenty of staff. The [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#) recommends having at least one caregiver for every five to seven children ages 2 to 3, and 1:8 to 1:10 for 4- and 5-year-olds.

1. How are the kids grouped? mixed ages / grouped by age
2. How large is the group my child would be in? _____
3. What's the teacher-child ratio in each group? _____

► **Staff:** Employees should be educated, **with at least two years of college**, a background in early childhood development (although many states don't require this), and [CPR](#) and other emergency training. Caregivers should be responsible, enthusiastic, and well prepared, sharing your philosophies on key childrearing issues such as sleep, discipline, and [feeding](#). A preschool with good staff benefits is likely to have less teacher turnover, which means consistent care for your child.

1. Staff and qualifications

- How many full-time teachers do you have? How many assistants?

- What are the staff's credentials and training?

- Does the staff have emergency training?
CPR: yes / no
First aid: yes / no
- How do you screen staff? Do you perform background checks before hiring?

2. Staff compensation and work environment

- Do members of your staff get benefits like health insurance and paid holidays? yes / no
- Do they get breaks during the day? yes / no
- How long do staff members stay at the school, on average? _____

► **Philosophy:** Be sure the preschool you're considering suits your personal philosophy. Think about, for example, whether you want a religious preschool, or one based on Montessori, Waldorf, Reggio Emilia, or another educational philosophy.

1. What is the school's educational philosophy?

2. Is the program developmentally based or does it have an academic focus? What's the advantage of your approach?

3. Do the children learn letters, numbers, and colors? yes / no

4. Will you be able to help me determine whether my child will be ready for kindergarten at the appropriate time? yes / no

► **Activities:** A good preschool will have a well-thought-out curriculum with a variety of activities. The program should be changed regularly so children have a chance to learn new skills and don't get bored. Television and videos should play little or no part in the day's schedule.

1. Are your toys and activities age-appropriate? yes / no

2. Do you have a safe, enclosed outside play area that encourages large-motor skills (climbing, running, riding wheeled toys)? yes / no

3. Do you have inviting and well-defined areas for different kinds of activities (art, music, blocks and toys, quiet reading, etc.)? yes / no

4. What will my child be doing on any given day? May I see the class daily schedule/routine?

5. What about extracurricular activities (dance, music, storytelling from an outside provider)?

6. Do you have field trips? If so, do you provide safe transportation?

7. What role, if any, does television have at the preschool?

► **Social Skills:** A good preschool program teaches children to take care of themselves and to respect other children and adults. Providers should help children learn how to express themselves appropriately, discipline them kindly, and encourage their good behavior.

1. How do you discipline children?

2. How do you comfort children?

3. How do you handle teasing, bullying, and inappropriate group behavior among the children?

► **Health, Hygiene, and Safety:** A good preschool is clean and sanitary and observes basic safety rules. If you see poorly maintained equipment or the preschool seems dingy or cramped, keep looking.

1. Health

- Must children be immunized in order to attend? yes / no
- What is your sick-child policy?

- What if my child needs medication during the day?

2. Hygiene

- Do caregivers wash their hands before feeding the children? yes / no
- Are children taught/required to wash their hands after using the potty? yes / no
- How often are the toys cleaned and replaced?

3. Safety

- How old is your play equipment? When was it last inspected?

- Are the children ever left unattended? yes / no
- Do you have a sign-in and sign-out sheet? Are the doors secure so strangers can't just walk in? yes / no
- What is your release policy? Who may pick up my child?

- What is your disaster plan? Do you have procedures for handling fires, earthquakes, intruders, and other emergencies? Is the staff well trained for these situations?

► **Food and Sleep:** If the preschool provides food, make sure it serves nutritious meals (covering all four food groups) and snacks. Nap areas should be clean and quiet.

1. Eating

- Do you provide breakfast, lunch, and/or snack? yes / no
- If yes, what kind? _____
- If not, what kind of food should I bring for my child? Are there any food restrictions?

2. Nap times

- Are children required to sleep, and if so, for how long?

- What is the nap schedule?

- Where do the children sleep?

▶ **Additional considerations:** Be sure to take a moment to ask yourself the following questions when you visit.

1. Do the staff and children seem happy and engaged? yes / no
2. Do caregivers talk directly to the children? Is their tone friendly and caring? yes / no
3. Is the preschool clean and pleasant? yes / no
4. Is the bathroom a pleasant setting, encouraging children to use it? yes / no
5. Are appropriate safety measures (fire extinguisher, first aid kit, fences, etc.) in place? yes / no
6. During the hours you and your child are apart, will you feel at ease knowing your child is in this setting? yes / no

▶ **References:** Ask each preschool you're considering for a list of past and present references — and call them. Ask specific questions: Instead of asking whether they like the preschool, ask what exactly they do and don't like about it. If their child is no longer there, ask why.

Can you give me the names of some families I could call for references?

Name _____ Phone # _____

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