



"Good"byes

Ideas to help make the good-byes easier for you and your child

Separations from parents can be especially stressful for young children, particularly older infants and toddlers. But there are things parents can do to help children make the adjustments a little smoother. In time, children will separate easier from parents.

How to prepare your child for a new child-care center

- ◆ Talk about the new center a few days before the child will attend. (For preschoolers begin talking about the new center a week or two before they will attend.)
- ◆ Visit the new center, including the room where your child will be. Meet the new teacher with your child. Make the visit when there are fewer children in the room, so your child won't be overwhelmed.
- ◆ Read a book about going to child-care with your child.
- ◆ If possible, take your child to your workplace. "Children will likely feel more involved knowing what you do during your time away."*
- ◆ Talk to your child about feelings they have about being away from you and meeting new friends. Empathize with your child. Let her know that you understand her fear or sadness.

How to help your child adjust to a new center

- ◆ Establish regular routines when you are getting ready. Routines provide children with predictability and a sense of control.
- ◆ Allow your child to take a comfort item with him to child-care, like a stuffed toy or pacifier.
- ◆ Take a picture of your family for your child to have at child-care. Good programs place pictures of children with their families at children's eye level in the room. This gives children a "sense of continuity and belonging".*
- ◆ Allow plenty of time to get ready. When parents are rushed and stressed, they can be assured their children will also feel stressed. Separations under stress will not go smoothly.
- ◆ While driving to child-care, sing songs or talk about what you will do together that evening.

How to help your child when it is time to say good-bye

- ◆ Arrive early, so you have plenty of time to ease your child into the activities before you must leave. Children need time to adjust to the surroundings *with* their parents before they can be comfortable enough to stay *without* their parents.
- ◆ Greet your child's teacher, with your child. Children need to feel assured that their parents are completely comfortable with the teacher. In quality programs the teachers greet each child upon arrival and assist the parent in helping their child get involved in activities and make friends.



- ◆ Allow your child to express sadness at saying good-bye. We help children when we allow open expression of feelings and when we let children know that we understand. It is not helpful to tell children to stop crying or to tell them they *shouldn't* be sad.
- ◆ Give your child warnings before you leave. For example, say, "In three minutes I'll go bye-bye" or "I'll leave for work in two minutes."
- ◆ Tell your child when you will pick her up. For example, say, "After your nap I will be here to get you." (Ask the teacher about the day's activities, so you can be fairly precise about the last activity before you pick up your child.) Children need concrete information about pick-up time. They are confused by statements like, "I'll pick you up later", or "I'll pick you up after work."
- ◆ Give your child something to do when you leave. For example, ask your child to shut the door for you, or wave bye to you while in the teacher's arms.
- ◆ Always say good-bye with a hug, a kiss, a smile and wave. Your child needs to see that you are comfortable with leaving. Even if you are feeling sad about leaving, you need to let your child see confidence in the choice to leave.
- ◆ After you have said good-bye, then leave, even if your child is crying. Going back to comfort your child will only make separations more difficult. Teachers in quality programs will assist parents in the good-bye process. Teachers will hold and comfort the crying child. Then they will help the child get involved in an appropriate activity that will help him adjust to the room.

Ways parents can help their child with the reunion at the end of the day

- ◆ Make sure you are ready to greet your child as her loving, attentive parent, regardless of how your day went at work. Do whatever is most helpful for you to shift gears from employee to parent.
- ◆ Be aware that there are a variety of common reactions from children at the end of a day in child-care. Some children 'unload' on their parents the minute they arrive. Other children ignore their parents and refuse to leave. Other children are ecstatic about the reunion. Parents must be prepared to respond positively and firmly to whatever reaction their child has at the end of the day.
- ◆ Let your child know that you understand her feelings. Then share your positive feelings about seeing your child again. Let her know that you missed her while you were at work, and that you are glad to see her.
- ◆ Help your child make the transition from center to home by following some routines, like putting away toys, getting his backpack and saying good-bye to friends.

Important points to remember

Always go with your child into her room.

Always involve your child in transition routines upon arrival and departure.

Always say good-bye to your child. Never sneak away.

Always inform your child and his teacher when your pick-up time will be later than usual.

All children are different in their responses to being away from parents. However, if your child has not made progress in his response after two weeks in a new program, please contact a child development specialist for consultation.

*Source: "So Many Goodbyes" by Janet Brown McCracken (1990) NAEYC

For more information contact your county health department.

