



## CHOOSING SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE

Here are some things to think about when you look for school-age child care:

1. Caregivers should be caring and resourceful, and understand the important role that adults play in school-agers' lives.
2. Caregivers should understand the importance of peers and friends to your child, and the program activities should reflect that understanding.
3. Programs should use both mixed and same age groupings, and also offer activities according to interests, not just age.
4. Activities should be primarily child selected, with guidance and planning from the staff. School-agers have a strong need to plan their own activities, and make decisions about their care.
5. Activity areas inside and out should be flexible with separate spaces for different kinds of activities. For instance, there should ideally be an outdoor area where kids can run and play sports, an indoor space for cooking and eating, a space for homework and quiet reading, and a space to visit with friends or play games.
6. Children need to unwind after a very scheduled and rule oriented school day. Is there time and space for your child to kick back and "do nothing" when needed, just as a child might do at home?
7. The program should use conflict resolution and positive guidance rather than punishment to help children develop self-control and learn to behave appropriately.

Your school-age child, grades K-8, may spend a lot of time in school-age child care. He/she may be in care for several hours before and after school, and for entire days during school holidays and vacations. This is a significant amount of time in your child's life, and such daily care requires much more than a baby-sitter.

The needs of school-agers are different from those of younger children. Your child needs a skilled caregiver with knowledge of child development and appropriate activities for this age group; someone who can offer a program that supports your child's self-esteem, physical, social and intellectual development.

Kids think with their feet, they need to be active. Your school-age child will not thrive in a program that is boring, or one that doesn't offer activities that satisfy his or her needs and interests. Your older child won't want to be in a program that he or she feels is designed for *little kids!*

Take the time to visit several centers or family day care homes. Think about your child's needs and interest ahead of time, and spend at least an hour talking to staff about how the program can meet those needs. Spend some of that time watching other children, and try to determine if your child would be happy there. When you're ready to make a decision, take your child for a site visit. Listen to what your child has to say, ask them if they'll be happy at a particular site.

Once you have selected a site, don't forget Oliver's Law! Call Community Care Licensing to find out if the facility has had any substantiated complaints. (510) 622-2614



For more information, please call (925) 417-8733 or visit [www.childcarelinks.org](http://www.childcarelinks.org)