Choosing the right kind of child care is one of the first important issues a new parent faces.

65% of American women with children under age 6 are in the workforce, compared to 30% in 1970.

Their child care choices follow:

- **Nanny:**
  - Parents choose nannies because they believe their children will be safer and feel more secure at home, they find them more flexible and convenient, and if there is more than one child, they find it less economical to sand.
  - More personalized attention
  - Care at home is more convenient than out-of-home care
  - More flexible than child care centers and home child care situations
  - Children stay in familiar surroundings

- **Child care center:**
  - Parents choose child care centers because they want their children to be in a home-like environment and think their children are happier and healthier in smaller groups.
  - More affordable than nannies
  - More supervision
  - More stable
  - Bonding with teacher
  - More structured

- **Home child care:**
  - Parents like this choice because they want their own children in a home-like environment and think their children are happier and healthier in smaller groups.
  - More affordable than nannies
  - More supervision
  - More stable
  - Bonding with teacher
  - More structured

- **Relative care:**
  - Parents choose relative care because they believe that relatives will provide more loving care for their children, and that relatives and child care philosophy will be more aligned.

**Pros**

- More personalized attention
- Care at home is more convenient than out-of-home care
- More flexible than child care centers and home child care situations
- Children stay in familiar surroundings

**Cons**

- Most expensive child care option ($300 to $700 a week)
- No naptime supervision
- Most providers don’t have enough time to plan early childhood education or early childhood development
- No caregiver supervision
- Less stringent licensing requirements

**TIP**

- Spaced time carefully investigating your child care options, beginning about six months before you need it. If possible, start early.

**ACTION ITEMS**

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Can you or your spouse afford to stay home with your child? It is also important to ask what you’d be happiest doing.
2. How much can you afford to pay? Nannies are usually most expensive, in-home child care least.
3. How flexible is your schedule? Child care centers and preschools usually have set drop-off and pick-up times.
4. Does your company offer a child care center, allow you to bring your baby to work with you, or let you work at home? This benefit allows you to continue working and still be near your child.
5. Do you have relatives nearby that can help? Many parents prefer relative care, especially with infants, because they know this caregiver best.

6. Would your child benefit the most from group play or from more individualized attention? During the first year, individualized attention is often best. After that, look for an environment that gives a mix of both.
7. Does your child have health issues or needs that require special attention? If so, you need to review them with your child’s pediatrician and ensure those needs are being met.
8. Do you prefer structured play and activities for your child, or are you comfortable with a more free-form situation? Some settings are more structured, while others have more flexible schedules. A balance is often best.