

The First-Month Daycare Checklist

Everything you need before (and after) day one · from a mom who's done it three times

LITTLE LOVING LIFE

1 · PREP WEEK — BEFORE DAY ONE

- Visit the center together (twice if you can)
- Meet the teacher — learn their name
- Practice short separations at home
- Shift meals & naps toward the daycare schedule
- Read the sick policy AND the food policy
- Label everything (list below)
- Stock the cubby (inventory at right)
- Pick a short goodbye ritual & rehearse it
- Decide with your partner who covers sick days

2 · LABEL IT ALL (first name + last initial)

- Water bottle + backpack
- Lunch box & food containers
- Every clothing item — on the tag, not the fabric
- Both shoes
- Lovey / comfort item
- Hat, mittens & seasonal gear
- Sunscreen bottle

Labels won't stick to silicone — use a permanent marker on the base instead.

3 · THE DAILY BAG

- Water bottle
- Comfort item (if your center allows it)
- Weather layer
- Daily report folder
- Wet bag for the trip home

4 · THE CUBBY (lives at school)

- 2+ complete spare outfits — socks included
- Sized UP (cubby clothes sit there for months)
- Each outfit in its own zip-top bag
- Diapers & wipes (if you're in that era)
- Nap bedding (if required)
- Sunscreen / seasonal gear

Set a calendar reminder: swap cubby clothes before the season turns.

5 · SICK-DAY RULES (AAP baseline)

- Fever + cough / runny nose / sore throat = stay home
- Return after 24 hrs fever-free, without fever meds
- Vomiting or diarrhea = stay home
- Too sick to join activities comfortably = stay home
- Unsure? Call the center before drop-off

Your center's own policy may be stricter — it wins.

6 · THE GOLDEN RULES OF MONTH ONE

- Short goodbye, same every day — then actually leave
- Never sneak out
- The week-two regression is NORMAL
- Most kids stop crying minutes after you leave
- Sickness is immune-system tuition, not a verdict