

Can you believe that it's almost the end of the year already?

Along with the excitement of Christmas and the prospect of a few days off work, this time of year always seems to bring with it an added level of chaos (as if we weren't already busy enough!).

Most child care facilities close down for some of the holiday period and many will have already sent out notes to parents advising of enrolments or re-enrolments for the next year.

To make sure you aren't caught short as the year draws to a close, here are a few key things you need to ensure are done before you pack up for the silly season.

Book your babysitter

Christmas parties have already started for some people and to ensure you have the chance to get out this festive season without the kids, you better book that babysitter now while there are still some left!

What is the carer's age and experience? Has this experience been with children of similar ages to your own?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the carer capable of keeping themselves and your children safe? Check for first aid and CPR certification.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will they actively watch and entertain your children? Review their CV or online profile for this information.	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will the carer deal with difficult behaviour, separation anxiety, crying and whingeing?	<input type="checkbox"/>
How would they handle an emergency situation? Do they stay calm and act quickly and instinctively?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do they know when to ask for help?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel that the carer is really willing to accept responsibility for your children?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Be ready for child care

A few things may change for your child in the new year. Ask your service these questions and be prepared!

Have you re-enrolled your child for next year?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you up to date with vaccinations?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you checked for any room changes?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there any new routines or procedures to be aware of?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do they still have nappy change facilities in their new room?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do they have a different sleep schedule?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you met the new teacher and notified them of any allergies?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you toured your new room?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Starting 'big' school

How to prepare your child throughout the year

Talk about school. Ask your child what they think about starting school and whether they have any questions. See if friends and other families have positive anecdotes about school.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep your child healthy. Make sure their vaccinations are up-to-date and that they have regular dental and health check-ups in the year before starting school.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote independence. Encourage your child to do things on their own, like getting dressed, going to the toilet, washing their hands and grappling with their lunchbox and drink bottle.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get involved. Attend any transition-to-school programs offered by your child's current early childhood service and/or future school. Find out the school's hours and where to take your child on their first day.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nurture their learning and development. Ask educators how you can help your child learn and develop at home and once they're at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>

How to prepare your child over the holidays

Do a practice (school) run. Show your child where their new school is and explain how you'll get there. Go through their before and after school arrangements, purchase any school supplies and practise getting ready for school, i.e. packing their bag.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Find a fellow schoolmate. Arrange play dates with other kids who'll be going to your child's school. There's nothing like a friendly face on their first day.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read books. There are lots of great books about starting school, so visit the library or bookshop and look for titles like Starting School by Jane Goodwin, First Day by Andrew Daddo and One Keen Koala by Margaret Wild and Bruce Whatley.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be positive! Share in your child's excitement and, if they're a wee bit apprehensive, help them think about the up sides of starting school.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Final preparations

The night before, help your child get their clothes, hat, shoes and socks ready. Make sure they know who's taking them to school and who's picking them up.	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the morning, try to avoid the morning rush. Help your child pack their bag (including spare undies and a change of clothes for any accidents) and put on sunscreen if necessary. Once at school, show your child where they'll be met when the home bell rings.	<input type="checkbox"/>
After school, ask your child what happened during the day and congratulate them on completing their first day at big school!	<input type="checkbox"/>