Wellborn Learning Center

Discover. Learn. Grow.

Ready for Daycare

A parent's guide to an easier start

Simple, real life tips from a childcare director

Before we begin

A Note From Me

I've been in childcare since 2016, and I still get a little emotional watching a family walk in on their first day. If you're feeling nervous, you're in good company. Almost every parent does.

The families who have the easiest start usually aren't the ones who did everything perfectly. They're the ones who started a little early and kept things simple. That's what this guide is for.

With love,

Shay Betts
Director, Wellborn Learning Center

A few weeks out

Build the Excitement

Little ones feel safer with things they've already seen and heard about. A few easy ways to get there:

- **Schedule a visit.** Let your child see the room, meet their teacher, and pick out the toy they can't wait to play with.
- **Read about it.** Picture books about school or daycare make the idea feel familiar before the first day ever comes.
- **Play daycare at home.** Line up the stuffed animals and take turns being the teacher, the kid, and the grownup who waves goodbye and comes back.
- **Keep the talk happy and short.** "You get to play with new friends, and I'll pick you up after snack." Kids pick up on your mood more than your words.

A couple of weeks out

Practice the Routine

Ask your center for their daily schedule, then slowly shift naps, meals, and bedtime at home to match. Moving things a few minutes a day is plenty.

Try a couple of short practice goodbyes, too. A morning with grandma or a sitter teaches your child the most important lesson of all: you always come back.

> *Do a test drive at drop off time. When the route feels familiar, the real morning feels a lot less big.*

Packing the bag

Bring a Little Piece of Home

Every center has its own supply list, so ask for yours. Most bags end up with some version of this: two full changes of clothes, a crib sheet or nap mat cover, diapers and wipes if your child still uses them, and a family photo for the classroom wall.

Here's the part people skip: keep their things the same. Same backpack, same nap blanket, same comfort item, every single day. Familiar things help little ones remember the routine and settle in faster. And label everything. Ten pairs of tiny shoes really do look alike.

A quick safety note: babies sleep on their backs in an empty crib, so blankets and stuffed animals stay home until the toddler room.

The first day

Keep the Goodbye Short and Sweet

A quick, confident goodbye is kinder than a long one. Your child watches your face, so bring your brave smile, even if you cry in the car afterward. (Plenty of us have.)

- **Get there a few minutes early** so nobody feels rushed.
- **Settle in together.** Put their things away and find one toy to start with.
- **Say your goodbye and go.** A hug, a high five, and the same words every time.
- **Don't sneak out.** It's tempting, but a real goodbye is how trust gets built.

"I love you. Have fun. I always come back."

Feel free to borrow our favorite goodbye line.

Crying at drop off is normal. Most children are playing within a few minutes of you walking out the door. If you'd feel better checking in, call or text the center a little later and ask how they're doing.

The first few weeks

What to Expect

Some kids walk in like they own the place on day one, then cry in week two once they realize this is the new routine. That's part of the process, not a step backward.

- **Crying at drop off is normal.** It usually fades as the routine sinks in.
- **Crying at pick up is normal, too.** Kids often hold it together all day, then let it all out the moment they see their safe person. That's you.
- **Tired and clingy evenings are common.** New places take a lot of energy. Early bedtimes and extra cuddles help.
- **Talk with the teacher if tears last most of the day after about three weeks.** You're on the same team.

> *Be patient with yourself, too. This is a big change for the whole family.*

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Looking for childcare in College Station?

Wellborn Learning Center is Texas Rising Star accredited and cares for children from 6 weeks to 12 years old. Call or text to schedule a tour.

Call 979-316-7190 Text 979-204-9033

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