

Daycare Tour Checklist

Questions to ask and what to watch for when visiting a licensed daycare in B.C.

Use this during each visit. The goal is not to interrogate the provider - it is to confirm safety, understand the day-to-day experience, and capture your gut reaction while it is fresh.

DAYCARE / PROVIDER	DATE TOURED	CONTACT / FOLLOW-UP
LICENCE TYPE / AGE GROUP	MONTHLY FEE AFTER REDUCTIONS	HOURS / COMMUTE FIT

Before you go

- ☐ Confirm the licence type and the ages they are licensed to accept.
- ☐ Check inspection and substantiated complaint history through your health authority link.
- ☐ Bring your child's age, desired start date, schedule, allergies, and support needs.
- ☐ Ask whether you can join the waitlist during or immediately after the visit.
- ☐ Ask for the parent handbook or contract before paying a deposit.

Safety and staff

- ☐ What is the licensed capacity, group size, and ratio in this room today?
- ☐ Which staff are ECE, Infant Toddler Educator, ECEA, or responsible adult?
- ☐ Who covers breaks, sick days, substitutes, and opening/closing hours?
- ☐ Is valid first aid/CPR coverage always on site and during outdoor or off-site time?
- ☐ How do drop-off, pick-up, authorized contacts, and late pickup work?
- ☐ What emergency plans, fire drills, earthquake supplies, and parent alerts are in place?
- ☐ How are visitors, volunteers, and new staff screened and supervised?
- ☐ For infants: how are naps, sleep positioning, and sleep checks handled?

Daily program and fit

- ☐ Walk me through a normal day: meals, naps, outdoor time, transitions, and free play.
- ☐ What is your approach or philosophy - play-based, Montessori-inspired, Reggio, etc.?
- ☐ How do you comfort a child who is upset, new, or struggling at drop-off?
- ☐ How do you handle conflict, biting, big emotions, or unsafe behaviour?
- ☐ Can I see your written behaviour guidance policy?
- ☐ How do you support potty training, diapering, independence, and rest?
- ☐ How much active outdoor time do children get? Is there any screen time?
- ☐ How do you support children with extra support needs or different communication styles?

Health and food

- ☐ Who provides meals and snacks? Can I see a sample menu?
- ☐ How do you handle allergies, medication, cultural food needs, and special diets?
- ☐ What is your illness policy, and when must a child stay home or be picked up?
- ☐ How do you communicate accidents, illness, injuries, or other incidents?
- ☐ What are your hand-washing, cleaning, diapering, and toileting routines?
- ☐ How do you handle sunscreen, weather gear, heat, smoke, and poor air quality days?

Communication and money

- ☐ How will I hear about my child's day - app, photos, paper sheet, or verbal update?
- ☐ Who should I contact about concerns, behaviour changes, or schedule changes?
- ☐ What are the full fees, deposit, registration fees, late fees, and included/excluded costs?
- ☐ Do you participate in \$10 a Day, CCFRI, or support Affordable Child Care Benefit paperwork?
- ☐ What are your hours, closure days, vacation policy, pro-D days, and holiday schedule?
- ☐ What notice is required to withdraw, pause, or change schedule?
- ☐ How does your waitlist work, and what would make a spot more or less likely?

Watch while you are there

- ☐ Do staff speak warmly, at eye level, and with patience?
- ☐ Are children engaged, comfortable, and supervised - not just being managed?
- ☐ Is the space clean, childproofed, calm enough, and well organized?
- ☐ Is the outdoor area safe, usable, and appropriate for the age group?
- ☐ Would you feel calm leaving your child here on a hard morning?

After the tour

- ☐ Write down your gut reaction before you forget.
- ☐ If it feels like a strong option, join the waitlist today.
- ☐ Ask for the handbook or contract before paying a deposit.
- ☐ Compare daycares side by side on the notes page.

Tour Notes and Decision Scorecard

Fill this out right after the visit, before the details blur together.

Gut reaction

What stood out? What felt reassuring? What still feels unresolved?

Red flags

- ☐ Won't discuss licence, inspections, ratios, or qualifications.
- ☐ Vague or defensive answers about safety, discipline, or incidents.
- ☐ High turnover, frequent closures, or heavy substitute use with no plan.
- ☐ Punitive, shaming, rough, or dismissive treatment of children.
- ☐ Space feels unsafe, unclean, overcrowded, or poorly supervised.
- ☐ Pressure to pay before you review the contract or handbook.

Score 1 to 5

1 = concern, 5 = excellent

Safety/licensing confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Warm staff-child interactions	1	2	3	4	5
Staff stability/coverage	1	2	3	4	5
Program fit for your child	1	2	3	4	5
Communication/openness	1	2	3	4	5
Hours, commute, closures	1	2	3	4	5
Cost/value after reductions	1	2	3	4	5

Follow-up questions

Compare daycares side by side

Daycare	Fee	Hours	Ratio/staff	Inspection notes	Gut score	Next step

Simple decision rule

Shortlist daycares that are transparent about licensing and ratios, feel warm and well supervised, fit your logistics and budget, and leave no unresolved safety concerns.