



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE
TO RUNNING A
SUCCESSFUL
DAYCARE BUSINESS

Sylvie Saxton

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Dear Daycare Provider,

Thank you for picking up a copy of a "Fabulous Provider". I am so excited for you to join me on the daycare provider's adventure! Your career does not have to become a companion-less journey!

Are you:
Stressed?
Overworked?
Discouraged?
Lonely?

I am looking forward to becoming your **mentor** and **friend** - someone to teach you how to better run and manage your daycare, and guide you through what it means to have a successful daycare business.

It is difficult to understand the challenges and achievements that come with a daycare career unless you walked in a daycare provider's shoes. It is a very unique profession that requires a lot of time, effort, energy, patience and wisdom. It is a business where you work with different styles of parenting, family issues, expectations and requirements. How do I know? Because I have done it for many years. And although I was a successful and highly ranked in-home daycare provider, I still struggled and had to overcome a lot of hardships. Through difficult and challenging situations, I learned valuable lessons that helped me reach my goals and create a **Fabulous Provider** where I share my knowledge and experience on many different topics, such as:

classroom ideas,
interviewing families,
contract information,
creating a daily routine,
healthy eating,
discipline and much more.

I hope you will enjoy it, be inspired and encouraged! We are all in this together, ladies! We are FABULOUS!

Welcome to your new start!
Let's do this!

Sylvie

"**Today** is the day that EVERYTHING changes! Believe in the possibilities you can't yet see!"

Lara Casey

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1. INTRODUCTION

Three questions you should ask yourself before opening an in-home daycare...

You may be debating if daycare business is something that you should pursue. If you are still in the deciding stages, then please ask yourself these three questions:

#One

Why do I want to open an in-home daycare?

It might seem like a silly question to ask, but it is an important one. What are the reasons that YOU are pursuing this business? Based on my research, I created a list that perhaps you can relate to:

- working from home is what you have been desiring for a long time
- ability to be home with your own children
- financial benefits
- being your own boss
- being a business owner
- love for children
- love for teaching

If the reasons at the top of my list are why you are thinking about starting your own daycare, then you are on the right track! BUT - if the two reasons on the bottom of my list are not on your radar, then you are in trouble. Which leads us to question #2:

#TWO

Do you love children?

You may be thinking that LOVE is a strong word, and you are right! It is, but you cannot enter a successful daycare business without loving children. You will be surrounded by children for 10-plus hours a day (depending on your operation hours). Parents will be trusting you to take the best care of their kids. You will be required to feed them, teach them, entertain them and keep them safe. You will meet a lot of children from various cultures and backgrounds, and you will be expected to relate to each one of them.

Having a sincere love for children is a foundation to your successful business. You won't be able to build a quality in-home daycare without having a strong foundation.

#THREE

Do you enjoy working with people?

One of the biggest myths about the daycare business is that you work with children only. This is such an incorrect statement! You will be spending most of your hours with the children, but you will be working with the adults as well. In order to enroll children into your daycare, you will be required to do interviews - which means speaking with the parents/guardians. Interviews are a major part of your success! Without great interviews, you will have no children to watch. There will be times when you will have to confront the parents/guardians and it will require boldness and wisdom. Depending on where you live, you will be required to take classes in order to be a licensed daycare provider. If you enroll in a food program, you will be working with a representative.

So as you can see, since you will be interacting with so many different personalities, you have to be able to actively enjoy people if you plan on entering this business.

These are the 3 questions I asked myself before I opened *Sylvie's Safari* daycare. I strongly believe your success begins here. This is your foundation to build on. I cannot tell you if daycare business is something for you, as you are the only one that can answer that. But I am here to guide you and help you along the way.

Your daycare dream becoming a *reality*!

Some of us have a hard time making decisions. A simple trip to a coffee shop requires a lot of decisions, and a simple outing turns out not so simple anymore. "Should I get a tall or a grande coffee? Latte or Mocha? Iced or hot?"

EXTRA TIP: As a daycare provider you will need a lot of coffee. Trust me on this one!

Every day is filled with choices we make that impact our future. Just making a decision is a first step toward your daycare dream becoming a reality! Sometimes this decision can take weeks, months and even years, but If daycare business is a right fit for you, then let's do this! Congratulations. Welcome to your new start!

If you are going
to build a business, build a business
you *love*.

Marie Forleo

2. What's NEXT?

#1 Choose a name for your daycare

You want to start promoting your business as soon as possible! In order to do that you need a name. While you are choosing a name for your business, try to think of something unique that stands out yet represents YOU well. You want something that will be intriguing to the parents/guardians, so they will call for an interview.

I brainstormed with my husband while deciding on the name for my daycare. We chose *Sylvie's Safari*, as we both loved it. It was catchy and fun. It sounded like an adventure, and let me tell you being a daycare provider is a wild adventure! Of course all the children enrolled in my program, called my daycare Sylvie's House, but it's their parents who were intrigued by *Sylvie's Safari* which led them to call me for an interview. Being creative makes you stand out against the competition.

#2 Order business cards and marketing materials

As soon as you decide on the name, ORDER BUSINESS CARDS! You never know when the opportunity arises to share about your business, it can happen anywhere: grocery store, COFFEE shop, church, gym, pool, a birthday party etc. Some of the local businesses may allow you to post your business cards or a poster on their bulletin board, so be brave and ask around. I like to order business cards, greeting cards and marketing products from:

www.shutterfly.com

www.snapfish.com

www.vistaprint.com

Social Media Marketing

It is proven that social media marketing is a modern and a prosperous method to increase your business. I understand how busy you are having a daycare career, and how difficult it is to find time to promote your business on social media, but it is crucial in order to be successful. My advice will be to find an expert who can discuss your needs in detail and find the best way to help you.

I highly recommend Jeff Saxton and his social media marketing services. He is knowledgeable, talented and an honest person to work with. If you are interested in setting up a consultation appointment contact Jeff at:

jeff@jeffsaxton.com

#3 Chose space for your daycare

I am sure by this time you have a general idea where you would like to have your daycare. Is it going to be in your home? Or are you going to rent another home/space for your business? If

it's in your home, are you planning to make every room in the house available for daycare or only some of the rooms?

Let's talk about different areas in your house that you will need in order to run a successful daycare. Let's make a plan!

A *goal* without a plan is just a
wish

Kitchen

This is a MUST have! Are you going to use a separate kitchen for daycare or will you use the main kitchen? If you have one kitchen in the house, think about space you will need for daycare items. Make sure to provide enough room in your drawers and cupboards for daycare plates, bowls, utensils, cups and bottles.

If you have a pantry, use separate shelves for your daycare snacks and food items only. It will be easy to see what is available to serve, and what needs to be put on a shopping list for you to buy.

I would encourage you to do the same with the fridge. Keep your daycare food items separate from your family food. it may be worth it to invest in an extra fridge, if you have a place for it. (You will thank me for this little tip later while doing taxes and food reports. You're welcome!)

Will you have a small table and chairs for the kids to use during meal times or will you use your main table in the eating area? I encourage providers to invest in a table and chairs that are kid-friendly and kid-size appropriate. It makes meal times more enjoyable. If a child falls off the chair during a meal time, most of the time there is no harm as children's chairs are not very high. When a child needs to go to the bathroom, they are able to get up and go without your assistance. Also, these tables and chairs can be used while doing art projects. It's a great investment.

I purchased my chairs and tables at IKEA. They lasted for many years, and they were plastic which made them easy to clean. I also got my plates, bowls, glasses and utensils at IKEA. They were colorful, and the kids loved them.

Entry Way

Are you planning for the parents and their kids to enter your house through the entry way, a garage door or a separate door on the side of your house? Make it clear and easily accessible so your families know where to go. Also, it is easy to forget that most children will be coming with backpacks, jackets, shoes and diaper bags. Do you have *Cubbies*? Hangers? Lockers? Where would you like them to leave their stuff? Mornings can be hectic, so the more prepared you are the easier the mornings will be for everybody.

Play Room

Chose one room that will become your main area for daycare - a play room. You will be spending a lot of time in there, so make sure the room has enough space for children to play comfortably without being on top of each other.

If you can invest in storage furniture that will make your play area look great and functional. IKEA and TARGET were some of my favorite places to shop for items that helped me stay organized. If you don't live near any of these places, you can always do some shopping online.

www.ikea.com

www.target.com

www.toysrus.com

I chose the biggest room in my basement for a play room. This was the only room in my house, besides the hallway, where toys were allowed. My play area was an organized space with baskets and buckets where I kept building blocks, cars, puzzles, etc. Every toy had its place. You want to stay organized! Why, you may ask, because it makes cleaning up so much easier.

EXTRA TIP: Children seem more interested in helping with clean up when they know where the toys go! You will thank me for this tip one day! It's a life saver!

Class Room

Are you planning to teach and read with the kids? I will highly recommend it, as these are some of the top things that parents are looking for in a daycare.

If you decide to have a "class time" during your daycare hours, make sure you have a designated area for it. A separate room for a classroom would be great, but if it's something you are unable to provide, then make sure you create space in your play room for class purposes only. It can be a corner where you keep books, your "teacher chair", and educational

materials. Make it visibly recognizable for the children to know it's a spot where they learn. Do not allow toys in the "learning corner" or your class room as they tend to be distracting for kids.

Tell me and I forget. *Teach* me and I learn. *Involve* me and I remember.

Benjamin Franklin

Office

This is a very important room to have for your business. It will be an area where children are not allowed! You will do interviews with your potential clients in the office, which will make your meetings feel professional. Your in-home daycare is a business, not a hobby! You want to keep it professional. Try to be organized. Keep it clean and orderly, so when there is an unexpected visit from the licensing, food program or a parent - you are ready for them!

EXTRA TIP: Keep fresh flowers and a stash of secret chocolates in the office to brighten up your day! Some days you will need both!

Bathroom

Bathrooms are not exciting to talk about - but it's a necessity! You can't have a daycare without a bathroom. Will you be sharing your bathroom with kids or have a separate bathroom for daycare? Either way, make sure all your cleaning supplies and personal items are locked and not easily accessible.

You will need paper towels in the bathroom for kids to use after hand washing (required by licensing) and a step stool, so they can reach the sink while washing hands. A small toilet seat is going to be a great investment, as you will be doing plenty of potty training. Keep your bathroom clean - many times parents ask to use your bathroom at drop-offs and pick-ups. You don't want to be embarrassed.

EXTRA TIP: Think about what kind of daycare YOU would like as a child, then create it!

#4. Decorate

In this section, I will be sharing a detailed list of things to think about and accomplish while opening a brand new in-home daycare or re-doing an existing in-home daycare. I wish I had this list when I was first opening my business, but it is never too late for improvement. If you are already an existing provider and you desire change - this is your chance. Follow my list and make necessary adjustments, so you can become the best looking daycare in your area, which will impress your clients and make you prosperous!

Earlier on, I asked you to choose a name for your daycare (point #1). I assume you have it by now, so we can plan to decorate your space with themes that fit your the name of your business.

Decorating golden rule:
Live with what **YOU** love.
Unknown

As I said earlier, my daycare was called *Sylvie's Safari*. I made our play room to look like a safari - which went perfectly with the name of my business. I had pictures of lions, zebras and giraffes on the walls around the room. I also had *Sylvie's Safari* written on the wall with monkeys and bananas around it. I decorated the windows/curtains with safari animals, which was a perfect finishing touch to our play room area. I did not decorate my bathroom, classroom or the office in a safari theme. I did not want to go overboard, but I made sure that every room complimented my play room.

You may enjoy decorating your daycare with these creative themes: a world under the sea, a farmer's market, the fair, park and the playground, the zoo, the farm, a circus, stars and the sky, a castle or a garden.

There are so many fun themes to choose from, so be creative and go for it. You've got this, girl! After all, you are FABULOUS!

walls

Your daycare walls will have to be painted, trust me on this one. When picking out paint, don't be scared of COLOR. Kids love color, and you are creating rooms where children will be spending a lot of time. All rooms designated for daycare should be kid-friendly, inviting, and fun.

When you go to a painting store, there are many paint choices and I know you will be able to find something you love. I recommend purchasing all your paints from the same brand, so your colors will go great together and compliment each other. You don't have to paint every wall from top to bottom with the same color. Be creative! You can have an accent wall in the room where one or two walls in the room are one color, and the other two or three are a different color.

You can decide to paint your walls horizontally: half of your wall one color (like yellow) and the other half of the wall another color (like white to settle things down). Bright colors do not have to be crazy or overwhelming, and your walls can be painted tastefully.

why fit in when **YOU** were
born to **STAND OUT**

Dr. Seuss

When I was creating *Sylvie's Safari* daycare, I decided to go with a *Disney* color theme. I painted each room with a different color from a *Disney* line. My colors were bright and happy. The minute you walked into *Sylvie's Safari* daycare, you knew you were in the kids zone and it looked beautiful!

If bright colors are not your first choice, or your house is already painted in more neutral colors, there is no need to change it. Perhaps you can add some pictures, posters or wall decals to brighten up your space. Bare walls are not inviting, which is the opposite of what you are looking for as a successful daycare provider.

Another inexpensive way to decorate your walls is a bulletin board. It is a great tool to communicate with your clients where you post information and reminders for the families to see.

My favorite way to decorate daycare walls is by displaying children's art projects. Parents love to see what their little artists create at your daycare! Send their art projects home after you have new ones to display - this way there is always something on the walls. Remember, bare walls are not inviting!

I love shopping at Home Depot, Lowes or Menards for paint because they have great sales. Hobby Lobby is a fantastic store where you find many items that will help you turn your daycare into a beautifully decorated business.

EXTRA TIP: Don't forget clocks! Every room designated for daycare needs a clock. Trust me - you will appreciate an easy access to a clock wherever you are!

Furniture

Furniture is your biggest investment to create a functional daycare space, so make sure you have enough money in your budget to buy furniture.

As I mentioned earlier, children's tables and chairs are a great addition to your daycare. They can serve a double purpose - eating and crafting. I encourage you to buy plastic tables and chairs because they are so much easier to clean.

Another must have is an organized unit for the toys. I used an 8-cube organizer unit (4 cubes on the top and 4 cubes on the bottom). I placed it on the floor horizontally making it easy for children to access. I got 8 buckets that fit perfectly in the openings where I kept my toys. Each bucket was designated for different toys, which, as you may guessed, made cleaning so much easier. I also used the top of my bookshelf where I placed more toys that did not belong in any of the buckets. It was a great investment that made life so much easier and less chaotic.

The teacher's chair is an important buy as well. It is not a must have, but it is very helpful to have. So find a comfy chair that you love and get it. Use it daily for "circle time", "story time" and "teaching time." You will love it!. When you sit in your chair, it will be a visual sign for children to transition from play time to class time.

A nice desk plus chairs will be what you need in your office. You want to have comfortable chairs for your clients to sit in during the interviews. I also bought a cube-unit organizer for my office. I had labeled buckets in the opening spaces of my organizer where I kept my receipts, contracts, office supplies, cards and teaching materials.

You may want to buy bookshelves for daycare books, but I found that putting gutters on the wall and placing books in them is a much better and more functional idea. It will save you floor space, and won't make your classroom look cluttered.

Cribs or pack and plays will be a necessity if you have infants enrolled in your daycare. I did not buy these items because it was something I requested for the baby's family to provide. The pack

and play was given back to the family on the child's last day of care at *Sylvie's Safari* daycare. It might be a great idea for you to consider and contemplate in your business.

Carpet/rugs

What kind of floors are you going to have in your daycare? Hardwood floors or carpet? There are pros and cons to either option, but no matter what you choose, I will recommend that you have an area rug. They are ideal for adding color and dimension into your space.

In the play room, I decorated it with a "city street" area rug which became a play station for the kids to enjoy. In the classroom I added an "ABC's" area rug - which not only looked good, but also served as a tool when we learned the alphabet.

For the hallway, I bought little circle rugs and changed them accordingly to the season. We had monkeys, flowers, pumpkins, cupcakes, shamrocks, snowflakes and many more to choose from.

Area rugs are great and inexpensive if you want to change things up in your daycare.

EXTRA TIP: When you are finish decorating and organizing, take pictures! Post them on your media pages, so people can see

Front door

Front door is a first visual contact your clients will have with you, so why not make it welcoming and inviting? If you are brave enough, paint your front door with a pop of color. It will make your house stand out on your street, and that's exactly what you want! Place a nice wreath on your door, decorate your front step with flower pots and don't forget a nice door matt. You do not want to make your front door area cluttered, but you do want to make it inviting.

My house was white and so was the front door. I decided to paint my door yellow and make the house stand out, which was great for my business. *Sylvie's Safari* daycare was easy to find! It was a white house with yellow door!

So go ahead, my friend, and turn your front door area into a beautiful business card for your daycare.

Toys

Daycares cannot exist without toys. Playing is learning. Let me share from experience what toys are a MUST HAVE for your daycare.

Play is the highest form of research.
Albert Einstein

Toys You Can't Live Without

BLOCKS - Both girls and boys love to build, explore and imagine. I never bought LEGO blocks, but the bigger kind of blocks is what kids played with and enjoyed.

TRAINS AND TRAIN TRACKS - Kids love trains and play with them for hours. Do I need to say more? If you don't have these yet, you must go shopping right now!

KITCHEN AND KITCHEN GADGETS - Both boys and girls love playing in the kids' kitchen. It was one of the busiest areas in my daycare. The kids turned into little chefs, and it was fun to watch them create gourmet dishes! Make sure you have pots and pans, pretend food and kitchen utensils for the kids to play with.

SHOPPING CARTS - They go perfectly with your kitchen gadgets! We built a pretend grocery store where children went grocery shopping for what they needed in order to make their meals. It taught them to plan ahead, make shopping lists and enjoy a shopping spree! Babies love to push shopping carts - they make a lot of miles walking around with a shopping cart, which tires them out and get them ready for a nice and peaceful nap time.

DOLLS, STROLLERS AND CRIBS - What little girls do not like to pretend to be a mom? It is a must-have for sure! But you may be surprised how some of the boys join the fun and become little daddies. A lot of my boys loved to push strollers either with or without any dolls in them! It was so cute. Girls spent hours playing house and taking care of their little babies.

CARS - What boys do not like to play with cars? Boys and cars go together like peanut butter and jelly. Oh yes, and many times girls race around with the boys.

STUFFED ANIMALS - There is something comforting about holding a stuffed animal. The kids love to snuggle and play with them.

PURSUES, SUITCASES, BACKPACKS, LUNCH BOXES - Did you know that kids like to travel? Even if it's just from a play room to a hallway. At *Sylvie's Safari* we built pretend trains or airplanes with our little chairs and got to travel around the "world". Kids loved packing and getting ready for our pretend trips. We learned about different countries while playing - creative and educational.

CHALK BOARD / WHITE BOARD - Kids love to play school. Be careful though not to keep chalk or markers accessible at all times, as children like to be creative and "decorate" your walls and furniture. At *Sylvie's Safari* when we played school, we lined-up our little chairs and one of the kids became a teacher. Children would sit and learn from their peer. We took turns, so each child could be a teacher.

Another thing I liked to do, was to place a child's picture on the board, and the little artist shared with us about his creation. After the "artist" was done explaining what the picture was, we would clap to let him/her know what a great job he/she did. Everybody got a turn to speak and share about their picture. Kids were learning public speaking without knowing it!

PUZZLES - Make sure to have different sizes and varieties of puzzles. The younger children will need bigger pieces while learning how to do a puzzle, while older kids will need a little more challenging puzzles to keep their interest.

LAPTOPS, CELL PHONES, EDUCATIONAL GADGETS - As much as we would like to keep the little ones away from technology, it is technology they will need in their future. I had little play-laptops for the kids to send pretend emails and messages to their parents. I also had pretend cell phones, so the kids could call their parents, their little friends or grandmas and grandpas. They had a lot of fun having pretend conversations on their little cell phones. Of course ordering pizza was their favorite - because who does not like pizza? LEAP FROG has a lot of fun and educational gadgets I enjoyed to have at *Sylvie's Safari*.

WATER TOYS/BATH TOYS - I allowed children to play in the sink with our bath toys. Kids had to take turns, as only two little ones would fit at the time, but it was a lot of fun. If you are not ok with water mess in the bathroom, then this is probably not the activity you would allow at your daycare. I did not mind to clean water on the floor, because I knew kids were having a blast.

HAIR STYLIST CHAIR, BRUSHES, MIRRORS, SCISSORS - Girls love playing a beauty salon. If you are lucky, they will “pamper” you. I promise your hairstyle will be original.

SUPER HERO FIGURES - Boys were born to be super heroes. Even if you don't know all the super heroes in your collection, the boys will teach you all about them. We are never too old to learn, right?

TOYS FOR BABIES - If you enroll infants in your program, please make sure to have toys appropriate for babies. Toys that make noise and “light up” are babies’ favorites. Little toys that babies can hold and chew on are a must-have. Infants love to put toys in their mouth especially when they are teething. I had a separate basket where I kept baby toys, and I only took the basket out if I had a baby on board! These toys were not available for older children, which helped with keeping baby toys in good shape and not losing them. By doing this, baby toys lasted for many seasons which helped with daycare costs and saving money.

BOOKS - Barnes & Noble is my favorite place to shop at for books. I spent a lot of money on books because I wanted kids to develop love for reading. I provided a variety of books to read and books to play with. (Busy Books come with a play matt and little figures to play with.) I also bought books on a CD - which was a big hit with children.

MAGAZINES - Disney Junior was my favorite magazine for the kids. We had a magazine time which was one of the children's favorite times of the day. They were able to recognize characters in the magazine and participate in the activities that Disney Junior Magazine provided. There are other magazines to chose from like Frozen, Princess, Sparkle, National Geographic etc. Take a trip to Barnes & Noble or a grocery store to check out their magazine section and chose the one that will be the best fit for your daycare. Your kids will love it! And while shopping you might find a magazine for yourself - get it. You deserve it!

OUTSIDE TOYS - Hopefully you can take kids outside as much as possible. You will need outside toys to keep children entertain, busy and occupied.

SWING SETS, SLIDES - If you can afford to invest in a great outdoor playground set, do it. There is no question about it. Swinging is one of the most favorite activities for children. The best conversations happened while swinging, and as long as you can fit on the swing - join the fun. Who says that swings are only for children? Slides are as popular as swings.

SANDBOXES AND ACCESSORIES - It is another favorite! The kids at *Sylvie's Safari* spent hours and hours in the sandbox. Sometimes our sandbox turned into an ocean with a castle in it, or a kitchen or a bakery where things were being made. Sandbox fun is a little messy, so make sure to have extra clothes for kids to change. Some of the best memories are made in the sandbox.

WATER TABLES - These are a fantastic summer toy to have. The kids can stand around it and splash water and each other for a long time. I put water toys inside the water table to make it more exciting. It was PERFECT.

STROLLERS, LAWN MOWERS - These toys kept children busy and helped them to move around the backyard. They got a lot of exercise without knowing it, and so did I chasing after them! Working-out does not have to happen in the gym, right?

GARDENING TOOLS - Help children to plant and create a garden, either with flowers or vegetables. Kids will love watering their little gardens and harvesting whatever they planted.

BUBBLES AND KITES - Do I need to say more? Childhood memories cannot exist without flying a kite or blowing bubbles.

BALLS - Being active never hurt anyone. You might have a future soccer or a football star in your daycare! You just never know. So let them go and kick or throw that ball!

TENTS AND TUNNELS - You may not have enough room for these inside of your house, but there is plenty of space outside. Make tents and tunnels available only on certain days while being outside, which will help kids not to get bored with them.

ROCKERS, PEDAL/PUSH RIDING TOYS - These will keep your kids active and get their energy out which will make them ready for nap time.

POOLS - These are nice to have in the summer. Make sure to check the rules about kinds of pools you can have with your licenser.

#5 Coffee break

Reading all the valuable information I just shared, will require for YOU to take action. There are things to put on your TO DO list. But before that, you should sit down, enjoy a cup of tea or coffee, and relax for a few minutes! You deserve it!

Good ideas start with *great coffee!*

3. INTERVIEWS

First impressions are the most lasting.

Proverbs

This is a very important step on your daycare journey, so take extra time to create an interview process and contract that will give you authority to run your business efficiently. Interviews are the beginning steps to your profit!

10 Secrets To A Successful Interview

#1. Schedule an Interview

Your interview starts before your potential clients arrive. You probably had some form of contact either via phone, email or perhaps face to face, with people who set up the interview. First impressions are important - they could become a major factor in deciding about enrollment for both parties involved. Make sure to be professional, kind and positive while speaking with your potential clients.

#2. Come prepared

Things to do before your clients arrive:

- Make sure your entry way is tidy and clutter free, so nobody is tripping while trying to enter your house.
- Clean up the area you are using for daycare - bathrooms included. During the interview you will be giving a tour to show off your business.
- Have your office ready for the meeting: a clean desk, enough chairs for people who will be arriving, snacks and water available.
- Review the names of people you will be meeting with, and also names and ages of their child/children who might be joining your daycare.
- Have a contract ready to discuss.

#3. Always be on time

Even if your clients are running late, you should always be ready for them at the time you agreed to meet at. Do not be late unless there is an emergency. Make it clear to your potential clients how long you are willing to wait for them before you cancel the meeting. Most providers are willing to wait 15-30 minutes.

Your time is *limited*, so don't waste it living
someone else's life.

Steve Jobs

#4. Greet your clients

While you answer the door, greet your clients by their first names, shake their hands and introduce yourself. Start out the interview right!

#5. Be in charge

You are a professional business owner and the interview is not a social gathering. It is scheduled for business purposes only. The interview should not last longer than one hour. This gives you plenty of time to discuss business-related subjects. When your clients get distracted and get off track, change the direction of a conversation back to the original reason you met.

#6. Be confident

Interviews can be stressful, especially for the providers who are more reserved. Providers who are outgoing tend to enjoy meeting new people and interviews come naturally to them. But no matter what type of personality you are, be confident. You want to present your business in the best light possible. You want to come across secure and qualified. Share the attributes and education you have that make you stand out as an excellent daycare provider. It is beneficial to have reference letters, so your potential clients can see what other customers say about you, which is a powerful tool.

Be so good, they *can't* ignore you.

Steve Martin

#7. Discuss the contract

Make sure to have a copy of your contract and use it as a guide during your meeting. Your contract will have lots of valuable information that need to be addressed before starting a business relationship.

#8. Answer questions

Answer questions that you are asked in a way that is clear and straightforward. The more specific your answers are, the better the outcome. You want to set clear boundaries while providing information.

#9. Ask questions

Do not forget to ask questions, so you can learn more about your potential clients and their needs. It will help you to determine if the family is a good fit for your daycare.

#10. Finish strong

I suggest you will not make any decisions regarding enrollment while you are meeting. It is good to take time and review information you gained during the interview before making any agreements. Thank the family for visiting your daycare, and let them know you are looking

forward to hearing from them again. If you liked the family, follow up with an email or a phone call the next day sharing how much you enjoyed meeting them and asking if there are any other questions they may have.

(Of course there are exceptions to this rule, and if both you and the family are confident during the interview that your daycare is a right fit, then sign the contract and make necessary arrangements. Be cautious though, and don't jump ahead of yourself).

EXTRA TIP: Do not schedule interviews during daycare hours. You want to give your full attention to the potential clients without being distracted, and you want to keep children safe as you don't know what type of people you will be interviewing.

4. CONTRACTS & AGREEMENTS

A Contract is an obligation and a commitment that both you (as a provider) and parents or guardians (as clients) make to each other. It is a crucial and resourceful communication tool. If you want your clients to respect a contract they signed, you have to

follow and reinforce the contract first. Lead by example. In this section I will guide you step by step how to write an outstanding contract. If you are already an existing provider, follow this list to make necessary changes and modifications in your contract.

To be *responsible*, keep your promises to others. To be *successful*, keep your promises to yourself.

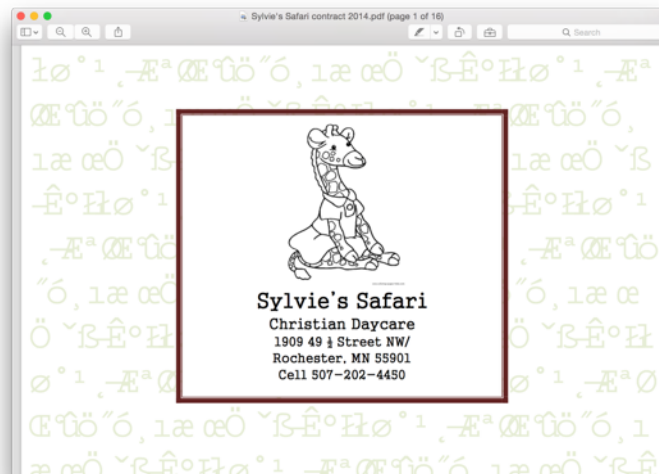
Marie Forleo

A Secret Code to An Outstanding Contract

#1 Cover page

It is easy to forget about PRESENTATION. Package your product beautifully, remember first impressions? You want your contract look professional, but you should add a little flavor of your personality to make it enjoyable. Your front page has to include: name of your daycare, address, phone number and email address.

Don't be afraid of art! I included a picture of a giraffe on the front page of my contract, that coordinated with *Sylvie's Safari* name, and I added other images of safari animals throughout different pages of my contract.



#2 Family's information

Information included on the first page should consist of: a date, agreement to enroll a child/children in your daycare, name and age of a child/children enrolled, birth date and a list of days of the week, so parents/guardians can select what days a child/children will be attending. This will be a good place to enter "hours of operation" and ask if there are specific times a child/children will be dropped-off and picked up. You might also want to include the parents' (guardians) information including: address, phone numbers, work place and work phone numbers.

Date: _____

I am enrolling my child in day care provided by Sylvie Saxton
I understand there is a \$50.00 non-refundable registration fee.
Paid: _____

Name of child enrolled: _____

Age: _____ Date of birth: _____

Monday _____ to _____

Tuesday _____ to _____

Wednesday _____ to _____

Thursday _____ to _____

Friday _____ to _____

#3 Payments

Being your own boss, you get to decide how much to charge for your daycare services. It will be wise to research daycare rates in your area, so your price could land somewhere in the middle. You don't want to be the cheapest daycare because of the quality you provide, and you don't want to be the most expensive daycare, especially if you are just starting. You will be able to increase your rates based on your education, experience and existence as a business.

EXTRA TIP: When you are first opening your daycare or if you need more kids enrolled, have a special rate to attract more clients.

Things to consider and include in the payments section:

What is your weekly rate?

Do you charge part time rates or full time rates only?

Do you have special family rates if more than one child is enrolled?

Are your rates based on the age of a child?

Do you have a non refundable fee?
How much is your deposit?
When are payments due?
Do your clients pay weekly, biweekly or monthly?
How much extra do you charge for late payments?
How much extra do you charge for late pick-ups?
Do you get paid vacation time? If so how many days per year?
Do you get paid sick/personal days? if so how many days per year?
Do you get paid for the holidays? If so which ones?
Do you charge for days when a child is on vacation, sick or not attending daycare?
How often do you increase rates?

Money is a sensitive subject to discuss. Make sure your payments rules and boundaries are clear and understood by your clients, so everybody is on the same page.

EXTRA TIP: Deposit money is a MUST! Charge a one week deposit at the time of enrollment. Not all daycare relationships end well. When a family gives you a two weeks notice, you will not be out of money if they choose to leave without paying you for their last week.

#4 Discipline

Discipline is a delicate and a tense subject, but it is fundamental and unavoidable while working with children. As a daycare provider you will work with multiple families whose views on discipline will range from strict to non-existent. Your approach on discipline has to be clear and confident, so both children and their parents respect strong boundaries while enrolled in your program. Healthy limits are necessary for a proper functioning daycare business.

*“Train up a child in a way he should go:
and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”*
Proverbs 22:6

Discipline should be immediate, verbal, and consistent. Your job is to teach children how to behave properly and train them to be respectful human beings. You are placed in a position to be their teacher first, not their friend. Part of loving children is to discipline them. When children are misbehaving, approach the situation without anger, you are trying to teach them a lesson, not to get even.

5 Secrets To Proper Discipline

1. Discipline with love.
2. Give second chances, but not 3rd, 10th, 11th....
3. Follow through with your discipline method.
4. Be consistent.
5. Do not play favorites.

6. Reward good behavior.

Develop a strong discipline system that works for your program, so you can provide care without chaos.

Things to consider and include in the contract regarding discipline:

Do you discipline?

What form of discipline do you use? Most daycare providers use time-outs.

Do you communicate with parents/guardians if the child misbehaves?

Do you give second chances?

Do you expect parents to pick the child up early when he/she misbehaves?

Do you make children apologize to their friends?

Are parents responsible to cover the costs if their child broke a toy?

EXTRA TIP: After time out is over, always hug a child and talk with him/her about their behavior without shaming.

#5 Food/meals

As a daycare provider you help children get nourishment and energy by serving three healthy meals a day: breakfast, lunch and snack. Some providers choose to serve an extra snack in the morning or just before pick up, but this comes down to personal preference. Most in-home daycares are a part of a food program, which provides reimbursement for meals and snacks served to children enrolled at your daycare. When you become a member of a food program, you are assigned to a representative who will explain the rules you will be required to follow. If you are interested in joining a food program, contact your licensor to find out what programs are available in your area.

Things to consider and include in the food section of your contract:

What time do you serve daily meals?

Do you make special meals for kids with allergies?

How long do you serve breakfast?

Do you expect parents to feed their kids if they are coming late and meal time is over?

Do you allow kids to bring their own food?

Do you allow kids to bring treats?

Do you make a food schedule for parents to take home?

Do you belong to a food program?

EXTRA TIP: Provide a sample of your daily menu, so parents can see what kind of food children are being served at your daycare.

#6 Medication procedures

Medication, including sedatives, aspirin/Tylenol, dietary supplements should be given or applied only with written permission from the parent/guardian of the child.

In order for you to take responsibility for administering medication, the parent must fill out and sign "Permission to Administer Medication" form. Medication has to be brought in the original bottle/tube with the prescription label attached. The prescription has to include: name of the child, name of the medication, amount of dosage and directions for administering.

EXTRA TIP: Keep medications out of reach of children and in a secure place.

#7 Injuries

The daycare business involves children, and children will sooner or later experience injuries. It seems like there is always an "owie" we need to take care of. Some of the injuries are small like a scratch and some are more serious like a broken tooth or a twisted ankle. Let the parents/guardians know what steps you will take as a provider if injuries occur at your daycare. Assure the parents/guardians that decisions and actions will be made based on the best interest of a child which might require a trip to ER, a doctor's visit or sending a child home.

#8 Releasing a child to a non-parent

Parents are expected to drop off and pick children up at daycare, however there are times when different arrangements are being made with family members or friends. If a parent/guardian expects you to release a child to a non-parent, you have to be notified about the date, time, and name of person who will be picking up. ID will be required.

Your main mission is to keep children safe, so make sure they are going home with the right person.

#9 Transportation

It is a personal decision of every provider if they want to transport children. Some providers go to parks, museums, movies or the zoo during daycare hours. If you are going on field trips with children during daycare hours, parents have to fill out and sign "Permission to Transport" before your trip. Always let the parents know where you are going, what time you are leaving and what time you will be arriving back - you don't want parents to show up at your house without you being there. If this is something you are interested in, check with your licensor about classes that are required to take before transporting children. And ask your Insurance agent!

#10 Forms and agreements

In daycare trainings we were always encouraged to have more forms for parents to sign than not enough. You want to be secure and protected while doing specific things at your daycare, like posting pictures of daycare children on Facebook or using a pool in the summer. Make sure you have a written permission from parents to do those things.

Forms and agreements to include in your contract:

Permission to Administer Prescription Medication
Trampoline Permission Form
Swimming Pool Permission Form
Wading Pool Permission Form
Permission to Post Pictures On Social Media
Permission to Transport Children
Releasing Child to a Non-Parent Permission
Consent Form

EXTRA TIP: There are many forms and regulations required by the licensing, so make yourself familiar with those as each state and county have different rules to follow.

#11 Termination of a child

Unfortunately there will be times throughout your daycare career when you will have to terminate a child. It is never a pleasant experience, but it is always a learning experience. We can't grow without facing difficult scenarios in life, can we? Lessons learned during difficult times are not easily forgotten.

*Not having the best situation, but
seeing the best in your situation is the key
to happiness.*

Marie Forleo

Terminating a child should be a professional decision, not a personal decision. When you as a provider choose to terminate a child, a two-week notice should be given to the family to allow enough time to find replacement. If the parents choose to terminate services, a two-week notice should be given to you as a provider with full payments regardless of whether the child attends during the two weeks or not. The advance deposit will be used toward the last week of care. In more severe cases an immediate termination might be required.

EXTRA TIP: Celebrate, as writing a contract is a huge and a tedious task but YOU DID IT! Go out to eat with your spouse or a friend to the best restaurant in town!

5. DAILY ROUTINE

I am a huge believer and supporter of a daily routine! As a provider you are working LONG hours and - some days, let's be honest, it can get boring. Daily routine helps you to be more productive, keeps your tasks on track, and make your days less chaotic. Research shows that children function and behave better if they have a routine to follow. Daily routine is a great recipe for enjoyable days both at home and at daycare!

I will share my daily routine that worked great for Sylvie's Safari daycare, but I want you to be aware that what works for some may not work for others. Each daycare has a unique DNA, so you have to create a routine that will function best for you and the kids you are taking care of. If you have babies enrolled in your daycare, you will have to consider feeding times and baby nap times while creating your schedule.

Things to consider while creating a daily routine:

What time are children arriving?
What time are children being picked up?
What time do you serve meals?
Do you go outside with children?
What are the ages of children enrolled in your daycare?

Sylvie's Safari daily routine

7:30am Children arrive

I greeted the kids and helped them to wake up and start their day. This is the time when kids have a lot of stories to share.

8:00am - 8:30am Breakfast

8:30am - 9:30am Clean up, potty time, diapers and FREE PLAY TIME

This was a good time for kids to reconnect and play together before entering a more structured time.

9:30am - 10:00am Dance time, exercise time

This was a lively activity to help kids get their energy out, and to help me wake up some more! By this time I already had my coffee, but moving around and getting exercise was exactly what we all needed.

10:00am - 10:30am Class time

After getting the energy out, kids were ready to sit down and listen to my teaching for the day. My kids loved learning, so sometimes our class time lasted 45 minutes. But adjust it to what works best for your children.

10:30am - 11:30am Outside time

There were times we stayed outside a little longer if the weather was beautiful, as I am a huge supporter of getting fresh air!

11:30am - 12:15pm Lunch time

12:15pm - 12:30pm Potty, diapers, getting stuff ready for nap time**12:30pm - 3:00pm Nap time**

By 12:30 all my kids were ready for nap time or quiet time. They were tired out from our morning routine, which is exactly what you want! No time for boredom will serve you well to a surprisingly wonderful nap time!

3:00pm - 3:15pm Wake up time, potty time, diapers and clean up after nap

Some of the kids took a little longer to wake up. If they were very tired, I let them sleep till 3:30pm, but never later than that as I did not want to mess with their nightly bed time routine. My daycare parents appreciated it!

3:15pm Snack time**3:30pm - 4:00pm Art time or story time**

Some days I did art time in the mornings and skipped story time during class, but then I did story time in the afternoons. I wanted the kids to fall in love with reading books, so story time was an important part of our daily routine.

4:00pm - 5:00pm Outside time**5:00pm - 5:30pm Diapers, potty,**

Most of the time kids did not want to go inside, so after diapers/bathroom runs we came back outside and played some more while waiting for the parents to pick up.

5:30pm Pick up time

This schedule worked wonderful for Sylvie's Safari daycare. As you can see, there were days I made changes and adjustments, but this was a great foundation for our daily activities. You are welcome to use this timetable as a guide to build your daily routine.

ETRA TIP: You may have to create a different schedule for different times of the year. Seasons can effect your outside time- especially winter!

6. CLASSROOM IDEAS

Do you love to teach? I was born to teach! I believe that it is never too early or too late to learn something new. As a daycare provider, you have the honor to start investing in children at a very young age. There are so many things to be discovered during early childhood development stages.

Class time does NOT have to be boring! Be creative! As I mentioned earlier, children are always full of energy, so having an activity that requires MOVEMENT is a must have to help children pay better attention while you are teaching.

Let me share with you a class time routine I used, as a guide to create your own. You will enjoy it, I promise!

#1 Class time rules to follow

1. **Dance time** - Start out with dance or exercise time.
2. **Music time** - Have a few songs to sing with children before you start teaching.
3. **Alphabet** - Do your ABC's first. You will be surprised how quickly children memorize the alphabet while practicing on a daily basis. Singing the ABC's song and then adding some action moves to it is a fun way to learn! I also used flash cards so kids could get familiar with what the letters looked like.
4. **Numbers** - Practice counting daily.
5. **Days of the week** - Practice daily (when children know their days of the week, switch it up to months of the year, you don't want to overwhelm them and teach both at the same time).
6. **Story time** - Read a few stories you picked out that go together with the subject you are teaching. Talk about the story you read, ask questions and give kids the opportunity to speak. You will be surprised and gain a fresh perspective on each story you read. You will see it through the eyes of a child. Oh, and you will be entertained - trust me on this one.
7. **Write time** - Write and draw on the whiteboard while teaching. It will be easier for the kids to focus and your lesson will be more enjoyable for them. Pictures are a great way to keep children focused and entertained. Make it fun for them.
8. **Reward them** - Reward kids for listening and obeying - show them you noticed their effort.

#2 Reward System

I will share a little secret with you that will change your life forever! Are you ready for it? Let me ask you a question: who does not like to be rewarded for the effort we are making? As adults when we go an extra mile at work and do our best, being noticed and rewarded feels good. Right? We enjoy getting an extra check in the mail, a promotion or a gift. Being appreciated feels satisfying. Guess what? Kids are the same. They are little human beings - wired a lot like adults. The only difference is that they do not care about an extra check or a gift card. What they care about are treats - like fruit snacks or M&M's. So reward kids with what works for them!

I had a jar of M&M's in our classroom. Before I started to teach, I showed our jar to the kids as a reminder that there was indeed a reward at the end of our class time. If they listened and

obeyed, they were going to get ONE M&M! (sometimes they got two). And let me tell you, they worked really hard for that one little treat. I loved it and so did they! One little treat did not give them a sugar rush or hurt their tummies, yet it was such a little treasure they longed for.

There is a catch though. You see some kids did not listen. The listening kids had a choice to make: either to give into peer pressure or do what was right. This little practice taught children a valuable lesson to carry into adulthood: how to make choices and decisions for themselves no matter how other people behaved.

All the kids who followed the rules got rewarded at the end of our class time, and the ones that misbehaved did not receive an M&M. It was difficult not to give in, as their little eyes always looked at me begging for a treat, but I had to follow through and mean what I said when I shared the rules at the beginning of our class time. You see, a huge part for the reward system to work is being consistent and not playing favorites.

Teach the *children* so it will not be necessary to teach the *adults*.

Abraham Lincoln

I always ended our class time on a positive note. I acknowledged the kids who got a treat, and acknowledged they did an excellent job, BUT I also spoke to the kids without M&M's to encourage them to try harder the next day. I wanted them to know I still cared about them no matter how they behaved, and that they had another chance to make better choices. It may surprise you, but the kids without M&M's did not have tantrums but left our classroom encouraged and determined to get a treat the next time!

The kids with M&M's left our classroom happy and excited as well because their efforts were being noticed and they were rewarded. Both group of kids were recognized and addressed. I believe a big part of a daycare provider's job is to teach the academics but also to teach kids how to be respectful human beings.

Some of the other things that may work as a reward are marshmallows, lollipops, fruit snacks or stickers. I found that children keep their stickers on for a few minutes and then they end up on the floor or the furniture. Stickers are not easy to peel off or clean up, therefore I chose a treat that can be eaten and done with yet enjoyed by children.

I hope you are inspired to find a reward system that you and your kids will enjoy, or you can adopt my M&M's system and have fun with it! It is proven to work! I mentored other providers on this subject, and they always share with me how revolutionary the reward system is and how it changed their class time for better! Good luck!

#3. Subjects to study with children:

Family & Friends

What do you want to be when you grow up?

Farmers and their animals

Going to the zoo

Going to the fair

Going to the doctor

Going to the dentist

"*Education* is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. "

Nelson Mandela

Going to the movies
Going to school
Going to the beach
Swimming in the ocean with fish and other creatures
Flying like a bird
Going to the pumpkin patch & an apple orchard
Weather Reports
Transportation
Fun on the airplane
Fun on the spaceship - planets, moon and the stars
Fun on the train
Fun on the school bus
Traveling through the world: countries and cultures
Celebrating Thanksgiving
Celebrating Christmas
Celebrating Easter
Happy Birthday, America!
Happy Birthday, Mr. President!
Sleepover Fun
Gardening
Bugs and outside creatures
Picnic Fun
Feelings and emotions
Cowboys and Cowgirls
Actors and Actresses - creating a stage play
Winter
Spring
Summer
Fall

This is a terrific list of interesting subjects you can study with children. In order for your class time to be more effective, make sure you have posters, flash cards, books, magazines, a globe, and other visual objects that go with your lesson.

7. ART PROJECTS

Through creating art and crafts, children develop skills that are useful in other areas of their lives and give them a boost of confidence. They use fine motor skills to learn coordination, self control, patience, flexibility, sense of accomplishment and team work.

Do I need to do art projects at daycare? The answer is YES! But you do not have to do art projects every day - try to do them twice or three times per week. The best way to plan art projects is to coordinate them with your lesson plan.

Pinterest will become your best friend! It is a free website/app with many ideas for art projects. If you would like to learn more about Pinterest go to www.pinterest.com This is a great source for ideas when you get stuck and don't know what to do!

Every child is an artist
Picasso

Another great source for craft ideas is a daycare providers group on Facebook where people share pictures of their art projects with one another. Join a Facebook group in your local area, and you might even find new daycare friends to hang out with.

And last but not least - SHOP AROUND! Stores are a great venue for ideas to help you plan your own art projects, or to purchase the ones they sell. Hobby Lobby or Michael's will be your favorite places to visit - they are like little art studios ready to be discovered! Target provides a variety of seasonal crafts for young children, but your choices are limited. I like to check Target's dollar section for things that are inexpensive and delightful to have on hand for quick art time.

Must Haves In Your Art Project Box

Hot glue gun
Glue
Scissors
Stickers
Tape
Double sided tape
Paint
Paint brushes
Crayons
Markers
Construction paper
Googly eyes
Sparkles
Straws
Paper plates
Paper cups

8. HOLIDAYS, BIRTHDAYS, SPECIAL DAYS

As a provider and a business owner you will decide what holidays and special days will be celebrated at your daycare. There are many days on the calendar that public schools and daycares are closed - are you going to be closed on those days as well? Let your families know ahead of time so they can plan accordingly.

Christian holidays: Are you going to celebrate Thanksgiving? Christmas? Easter? I do not know what your background is, but these were celebrated at *Sylvie's Safari* daycare. I loved sharing and teaching about a deeper meaning behind Christian holidays.

Celebrate good times!

Christmas: We always decorated a Christmas tree, listened to Christmas carols and read stories about the birth of Jesus. We had a birthday party for Jesus during which we exchanged gifts with one another. The kids and I enjoyed doing Secret Santa - they drew names and brought a gift for a person whose name was written on their card. I bought Christmas gifts for every child enrolled in my daycare, and had a Christmas card for each family I worked with. Christmas was always a very special and personal season at *Sylvie's Safari* daycare.

Easter: We read a lot of stories about the sacrifice Jesus made for all of us on the cross. We had an Easter egg hunt and an Easter basket for children to take home, but they knew that the real reason we celebrated Easter was LOVE expressed on the cross. I shared the story in a way that was not scary and appropriate for young children.

Thanksgiving: We read stories about the Pilgrims, their journey to America, and the origin of an unexpected friendship with the Indians. Children learned about parades, football games and a delicious Thanksgiving dinner. My goal was to help the kids understand that helping one another and being thankful leads to a very fulfilling life.

Halloween: We had a costume party where children and I dressed up to show off our outfits. In the afternoon all the parents were invited to join the fun. I ordered pizza for dinner, provided a pumpkin for each family to carve together and to take it home when it was finished. It was an enjoyable evening for all involved.

July 4th: We made white, red and blue cupcakes using a cupcake mix, whipped cream, blueberries and strawberries. Children became little chefs, and they enjoyed every minute. It was a messy project, but a fun one. They sang "Happy Birthday" to America before eating their cupcakes. We also read stories about America and how this great country started. We sang the national anthem together and waved little flags that children took home. July 4th was a very patriotic and meaningful celebration at *Sylvie's Safari* daycare.

Valentine's Day: This was one of our favorite days at *Sylvie's Safari*. It included making and decorating brownies together which we enjoyed for snack time. We read the original Valentine's story and studied how this holiday started. We made Valentines for parents and grandparents. I shared with children what I loved about each one of them, and then they were asked to share

specific things they loved about each other. Children brought treats and Valentines they exchanged with daycare friends. They were allowed to eat one of the treats, pack the rest and take them home. No sugar overload was happening at *Sylvie's Safari*!

St. Patrick's Day: Another party day at *Sylvie's Safari*. We all dressed green, and did a lot of art projects that included rainbows and shamrocks. We read a story of how St. Patrick's Day started and who St. Patrick was. This holiday gave me an opportunity to teach kids about Ireland. I used a globe to show children where Ireland was and taught them about this country and its culture. It was great!

Mother's Day/Father's Day: What a fantastic time to teach children how special and important mothers and fathers are. We talked about each Mom/Dad represented at our daycare. It was wonderful to watch kids share and beam with pride while talking about their parents. We made beautiful crafts which the kids gave to their Moms/Dads at pick up. Many Mothers/Fathers shed tears and enjoyed being celebrated. If there was a child in daycare without a Mom or Dad, we recognized a person who was caring for this child instead. Unfortunately, there are scenarios when Moms and Dads are absent in children's lives, and it is necessary to be sensitive and compassionate to the child without a Mom or Dad.

Birthdays: It is special to celebrate life of a young child in your daycare. Make it a big deal, as each child deserves to be recognized and remembered on their birthday.

At *Sylvie's Safari* a birthday child brought cupcakes or treats as our special snack for the day, and daycare friends brought gifts for the birthday boy or girl. We enjoyed singing happy birthday, and sharing a treat together. Opening presents

turned into a valuable lesson how to enjoy somebody else's gifts without being jealous, and understanding your birthday was coming and you will be celebrated as well. It was also a great practice how to say "thank you" for the gifts. Celebration can turn into education!

Sometimes you will never know the *value* of a moment until it becomes a memory.

Dr. Seuss

Other holidays you may want to celebrate at your daycare are:

President's Day (February 20th)

Earth Day (April 22)

Flag Day (June 14th)

Columbus Day (December 9th)

Martin Luther King Day (January 18th)

EXTRA TIP: Plan ahead and purchase art supplies that will be a perfect addition to your holidays celebrations.

9. FOOD

Research shows that meal times are one of the most stressful times for daycare providers. Children can be very picky when it comes to food, but don't let it discourage you from trying new recipes and serving fruits and veggies. Food preferences are developed early in life, so provide an opportunity for children to learn new textures and experience new tastes at your daycare. They may not like everything you prepare, but they will be exposed to healthy meals and snacks.

Use a creative approach and incorporate lots of different colors in food selections you provide. Don't force children to eat everything on their plate, but request they try a few bites before deciding they don't like something or that they are full. It may take a few times to serve the same food item before children will accept it.

Be cautious when serving drinks other than milk or water, as they are full of sugar and empty calories that are not nutritious nor healthy for children. If you serve juice at your daycare, make sure it is 100% juice without added sugar or chemicals.

It will be helpful for your daycare families to know what meals you served during the day, to prevent parents from serving the same food for dinner. Also, it may encourage families to try some of your recipes and teach them good eating habits.

How not to go crazy while feeding children

1. Schedule daily meal times.
2. Create the kids' menu.
3. Decide what is being served at each meal.
4. Eat together at the table or a place you designed for meal times.
5. Lead by example and eat the same food you prepared for children.
6. Do not allow children to walk around with food.
7. Occasional deserts are fine, but don't turn them into a daily habit.

Baby food

If you have infants enrolled at your daycare, please make sure to follow safety guidelines regarding breast milk or formula. According to Mayo Clinic, you may keep extra breast milk in your freezer for up to 12 months, but it is best if used within 6 months. You can store breast milk in the fridge for up to 3 days, and outside the fridge for up to 6 hours. Never microwave milk, as it will lose its nutritional value.

Introduce baby food at the same time baby food is being introduced at home. Let parents be the first ones and offer new foods to see if their baby has any allergy reactions. Follow recommendations and suggestions from parents. Work as a team.

Little tricks to make food more exciting

Carrots - I told kids carrots make their eyes sparkle. When they had a bite of a carrot, I made a big deal about it and told them how sparkly their eyes were!

Milk - I told kids that milk makes their bones strong, so when they fall down their bones wouldn't break.

Meat - I told kids meat makes their muscles big, so they could be strong and carry heavy things.

Blueberries - We pretend to be Smurfs! Smurfs love blueberries and blueberries are good for our hearts!

Broccoli - We pretend to be giraffes! Giraffes like to eat trees, and broccoli looks like a little tree.

Sweet peas - Green balls! I encouraged kids to eat them and have a ball party in their tummy!

Corn - I asked kids if they knew that when corn pops it becomes popcorn? We had popcorn parties in your tummy!

Simple. Easy. Fun! And who said meal times have to be boring!

BON APETIT

Sample of a daily menu at Sylvie's Safari daycare

Breakfast: french toast, blueberries, milk

Lunch: crackers, cheese and ham, sweet peppers, grapes, milk

Snack: granola bar, water

Breakfast: cereal, banana, milk

Lunch: corn dogs, sweet peas, oranges, milk

Snack: cookies and milk - because sometimes we all need a chocolate chip cookie in our lives!

10. NAP TIME

“Do my kids need to take a nap at your house?” This is a \$100 question that you will be asked over and over again. And the answer is YES! Kids need nap time in order to grow and develop. Daycare providers need nap time in order to clean up after lunch, respond to parents txts/ emails, return phone calls, enjoy an interrupted cup of coffee and a few minutes of silence! According to research toddlers require 10-13 hours of sleep which includes an afternoon nap of 1-3 hours. Infants and young toddlers are encouraged to take two naps a day. Naps improve brain functions which leads to better memory, focus and creativity. Children stop taking naps at around age 4, but every child is different. No matter what age your child is, if he/she falls asleep during nap time, let them rest as clearly it is a sign they needed sleep.

5 tips to a successful nap time

1. Develop a consistent routine and set regular hours for nap time and wake up time. Make it the same every day, so children can fall asleep easier.
2. Provide a dark and cool room for children to sleep in.
3. Make children sleep in the same spot every day - either on the cot, sleeping bag or a crib. It will become their little “bedroom” in your house.
4. Play gentle music to block out noise: piano music, guitar or ocean sounds. It helps children to settle down and sleep soundly. Pandora is a great place where you can find nap time music.
5. Do not let children sleep past 3:30pm, so they do not stay up late at bed time.

How long should a nap time last?

These are the results of what I researched and observed when it comes to length of nap times:

3 months - 12 months

Infants and babies take two naps a day; One hour in the am, 2-3 hours in the pm.

12 months - 24 months

Toddlers take 1 nap a day, about 3 hours long.

24 months - 36 months

Young children take one nap a day, about 2-3 hours long.

36 months - 48 months

This is a transition time where naps become shorter about 2 hours or less.

4-5 years

Most kids at this age still take naps - about 1 hour a day. Even if children do not fall asleep, they need a quiet time for their brain to settle down. Encourage older kids to read books, listen to calm music, color or do a puzzle. Quiet time will help older children to have a more enjoyable afternoon.

11. NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO SHINE!

It's been so much fun to travel with you through the pages of the Fabulous Provider!

I hope you don't feel ALONE, STRESSED, OVERWHELMED or DISCOURAGED anymore, but you are excited and inspired by the practical knowledge I shared.

Now it's YOUR time to shine! You gained a lot of information, and I know you have everything you need to become the BEST DAYCARE PROVIDER there is! You've got this, girlfriend! I am here cheering for you and proud of YOU! Being a daycare provider is one of the hardest jobs on this planet, but you are gonna ROCK it! Yes, YOU!

I hope with the advice and the messages I shared, you will be able to create your dream daycare, decorate it beautifully and run it proudly! Love on those little ones, because TOGETHER you will change the world. Teach them, guide them, create memories and before you blink they will become adults, but they will never forget you! I cannot wait to hear YOUR story! I know you are going to have the best story! You go, girl!

And one more..... did you know that you are a HUGE part of my dream and my story? I am very passionate about encouraging and helping daycare providers. That is why I wrote the Fabulous Provider guide, but without YOU my dream could never become a reality. So thank you! You are FABULOUS!

You can *dream, create, design, and build* the
most wonderful place in the world, but it takes
people to make the dream a reality”
Walt Disney

If this guide was encouraging and inspired you in any way, please send me an email and share your story! I will be delighted to hear from you!

sylvie@fabulousprovider.com

If you would like to hear from me, please visit
www.fabulousprovider.com

On my website, I will be posting stories, pictures, recipes and much more! You don't want to miss it! Invite your friends to join the fun!

12. THINGS I KNOW NOW, I WISH I KNEW THEN

Let's talk, girlfriend! Ask Sylvie, and I will answer! You may not like or agree with everything I say, well write... BUT we can still be friends. These are the most frequent questions that I am being asked and little bits of wisdom I learned through my daycare career! Enjoy! Coffee cheers! Here we go!

How do I find customers?

Word of mouth will be something to seek after. Provide the best care to your daycare children and the best customer service to their parents. You will be full in no time, as word of mouth travels quickly. So make sure the message that is being spread about your daycare is a positive one. Post on Facebook when you have openings available. Bulletin boards is another way to get the word out, so talk to your local businesses and see if you can post on their bulletin boards.

How do I know what clients are the right fit for my daycare?

Women's intuition is a powerful tool, my friend! Usually your first impression is the right impression. If you have reservations during the interview, think twice before you enroll that family in your daycare. You may save yourself a lot of headaches! Remember when I mentioned not to be afraid to ask questions during the interview - yes, that's how you will know if the family you are interviewing is the right fit. Good luck!

What questions should I ask during the interview?

What are you looking for in a daycare?
Why did you leave your last daycare? (if applicable)
What hours do you need daycare for?
Do you discipline your children?

What are some common questions clients ask during the interview?

What are your rates?
What are your hours?
Are you the only one taking care of children?
Is it a smoke free house?
Do you take paid vacation? How many days per year?
Do you charge when my child is not here?
Do you have your own children?
Are you pregnant?
How long is your maternity leave?
Do you babysit after hours?
What is your school district?
Do you transport kids?
Do you go on field trips?
How long have you done daycare for?

What is the best time for an interview?

Don't ever schedule an interview during daycare hours. Two reasons:

1. Safety of the children present at your daycare
 2. Ability to give your full attention to the potential clients.
- Early evening is the best time to schedule for an interview.

Do I become friends with my clients?

This is a tricky question, because there is no way that you won't become friends with your clients, as you will be seeing them twice a day! Some of my closest friends are my previous daycare parents, but did you notice the word "PREVIOUS?" That means they did not become close friends until I was done doing business with them. Money and friendships don't mix well together. I would warn you not to become best friends while you are still doing business. Avoid personal subjects like marriage, money, sex, and work.

Do I go out to dinner with my clients?

YES, you can go out to dinner, but I would not invite my daycare family over for dinner at my house, or attend dinner at their house while still doing business together. Meeting at a restaurant is a neutral place for both parties involved. As always - be cautious! I learned it the hard way, but it's a lesson I will never forget.

Do I attend birthday parties at my client's houses?

It is totally up to you - but whatever you decide be consistent. If you choose to attend birthday parties for your daycare children, then you should try to attend all of them which is pretty much impossible. We all have lives outside of daycare, therefore I would encourage you not to attend birthday parties. This way nobody's feelings are being hurt.

How do I establish healthy boundaries?

Have you ever heard of a book *Boundaries* by Dr. Henry Cloud and John Townsend? It is a phenomenal book that will teach you how to establish healthy boundaries at your work place, but also with your friends and family members. It's a must read! If you don't have a copy, you should go and buy it right now. Healthy boundaries are HARD. Saying NO is hard, but if you want to be a successful business owner, you have to be strong! You have to follow your own contract - that's how you will establish healthy boundaries.

How do I deal with loneliness?

There are days when you will be lonely. I am sorry to be brutally honest, but that's the truth. You will be spending a lot of hours with children, and you will miss lunch breaks with adults, coffee breaks with girlfriends and just a plain adult conversation! BUT there are things you can do to fight loneliness. Try to go out of the house at least twice a week - either to meet your girlfriend at Panera for dinner, a walk with your spouse, going the gym or shopping! Anything to get you OUT! If you are part of the church, there might be evening activities available for you to join like a life group or a hobby group. During nap time, you can txt with your friends or check out Facebook. YES, I said that. The truth is we are all addicted to Facebook, because it makes us less isolated. So girlfriend, there are some options for you. Most of the evenings you will be tired, but force yourself to get out - you will be glad you did!

What age groups should I enroll?

If you are a licensed provider, then follow the rules that come with your license. Typically, your license will list how many children you can have total and the ages allowed. BUT most of the time you can decide if you want to enroll infants without discriminating anybody. Infants are the cutest little humans, but they require the most time and energy. Some of them don't do well adjusting from being at home with Mom to coming to daycare full of kids and people they don't know. It can get chaotic with little babies around. At one point during my daycare career, I decided not to enroll infants. Not because I did not like them, but because they affected my daily routine and schedule with older children. But you will figure out your own rhythm and what age group is your best match. The longer you are doing daycare, the easier it will be to find the right mix of children.

How should I charge for my daycare service?

Girl, you are the boss! Charge what you are worth! Most of the time daycare providers are too scared to charge more, but trust me, you deserve it. Find out what is the average rate in your area, and then charge a little more. You are a quality provider, and you come with a price tag. Saying that, make sure your daycare facility reflects what you are charging - keep it clean, organized and beautifully decorated. Also, you represent your daycare, so make sure to look good, act proper and no posting crazy stuff on Facebook.

How to resolve conflict with your clients?

This is a tough one. When the conflict arises, take a deep breath and come up with a plan. Try to meet with the family face to face, as it is so easy to misinterpret emails and text messages. Try to put your personal feelings aside, and share facts. You can always vent to your spouse or your close friends, not your customers. You want to stay professional. Talk slowly and don't over share. We tend to get nervous and say too much. Remember less is more. Try to understand where your clients are coming from, but in the end it is your business, so you have the last say. If the conflict appeared because of some of the things you did, be humble and apologize. We all make mistakes. If your daycare family did something that it caused a conflict, address it as soon as you can, and don't hold grudges. Always honor your clients, and forgive them even if they do not to apologize, but then do what is best for you and your business. After a meeting about conflict you will need a hot bubble bath and a good movie to watch. You've got this even the ugly parts of running a daycare business!

How do I get parents on board with my childcare?

One word - CONTRACT! Be a strict follower of your contract, and expect the same from your daycare families! This is the only way you will be on the same page. Good luck!

What extra classes should I offer at my daycare?

You don't have to offer any extra classes, but they are always fun to have. Music class, Zumba class, Spanish class are some your options! Check out who is available in your area, and talk with them about coming weekly to your daycare. It will be great for the kids, and you will have an adult to interact with. So it could be a win/win, but before you decide to do that, make sure you trust the person. Make sure she has no criminal background and she is reliable. Find out how much she charges for her time, and ask you daycare parents if they are willing to pay for her lessons. You do not want her charges to come out of your pocket, unless you have a lot of extra money and don't mind paying. If that's the case, then congrats on your success!

Is it ok to pray at daycare?

It is more than ok to pray at your daycare, if that is being communicated with your daycare families before they enroll their children. It is a delicate subject, but it is your business so you can do what feels right to you. If prayer is something your families do not wish for their children to learn, then you may not be the right fit for them. It's all about communication, girlfriend. So let them know how you roll!

Is it ok to read the Bible and biblical stories at your daycare?

YES! As long as you communicate with your families during the interview that you are a Christian daycare, and you will be teaching the Bible and reading biblical stories. You don't want any surprises because they can lead to a conflict which will give you a lot of headaches!

Sylvie Saxton

Creator of Fabulous Provider



My name is Sylvie Saxton, and I am a daycare provider mentor/coach. I help stressed and overworked daycare providers turn their businesses into a successful and money-making adventure. I help providers run their business confidently and clutter-free, so they can stay organized and turn their profession into an enjoyable career. My clients become confident business owners who thrive financially!

I have studied hundreds of hours and devoted many years to become a daycare expert.

Business Degree
Piaseczno, Poland

BA in Psychology and Counseling
Crossroads College, MN

Teacher Assistant - MOPS
Rochester Assembly

Lead Teacher
New Horizon Academy

Licensed Daycare Provider
Sylvie's Safari Daycare

Did YOU know?

Research shows that in-home daycare providers who work with children on daily basis last only 7 years or less before they have a burnout due to loss of productivity, stress, and anxiety.

Fabulous Provider helps providers like YOU make changes in your business and conquer challenges and difficulties, so YOU can become a successful daycare provider with clients who pay for your services.

Please subscribe to the Fabulous Provider here:

www.fabulousprovider.com

By doing so, YOU will be the first one to know about my new blogs, recipes, tips and practical advice that I will be sharing on my website! You don't want to miss out on all the fun!

Also, don't forget to Like Fabulous Provider Page on Facebook

www.facebook.com/FabulousProvider/

On my Facebook page I will be sharing a lot of fun stories and pictures that will make your day!

I am so excited to continue on this journey with you! Thank you for all your hard work and desire to make your business better. You've got this friend!

And never forget: YOU are FABULOUS!

5 fun facts about Sylvie

1. I grew up in Poland.
 2. My favorite color is PINK.
 3. I am addicted to coffee.
 4. I LOVE Starbucks.
 5. Shopping is my favorite exercise.
- OK one more because it's fun!
6. I am married to the best guy ever!



