

Nursery worker

Nursery assistant, pre-school assistant, playgroup assistant, nanny, childcare worker

Nursery workers help babies and children up to 5 years old to develop and learn in a safe and supportive environment.

Salary: £14,000 to £24,000 average per year

Hours: 35 to 40 per week

1. [Entry requirements](#)
 2. [Skills required](#)
 3. [What you'll do](#)
 4. [Salary](#)
 5. [Working hours, patterns and environment](#)
 6. [Career path and progression](#)
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1. Entry requirements

You'll usually need a level 2 or level 3 qualification in childcare or early years.

[The Department for Education \(DfE\)](#) has information on all approved childcare qualifications.

If you don't have a level 2 qualification, you can start out by working as a nursery assistant where you'll be supervised by more experienced staff. This could be a paid job or through volunteering. You could then train while you work.

You may also find it useful to have a [level 2 qualification](#) in English and maths which includes functional skills.

You could get into this career through an [apprenticeship](#).

You'll also need an [enhanced background check](#) which your employer will arrange for you.

You'll find information on careers and courses in childcare from:

- [Pre-school Learning Alliance](#)
- [Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years \(PACEY\)](#)
- [National Day Nurseries Association](#)

[Foundation Years](#) has information about early years education and childcare.

2. Skills required

You'll need:

- excellent communication skills
- the ability to work with children and their families in a sensitive and positive way
- creativity and imagination for game playing
- planning and organisational skills
- IT skills

3. What you'll do

Your day-to-day tasks will include:

- planning and supervising activities like arts and crafts, music and cooking
- helping children to learn numeracy and language skills through games
- taking children on outings
- feeding and changing babies
- observing children and making notes to write reports
- making sure children are safe and well

With experience, you could become a key worker for one or more children. You'll monitor their progress and share information about their development with parents or carers.

4. Salary

Starter: £14,000 to £17,000

Experienced: £17,000 to £22,000 (room leader)

Highly Experienced: up to £24,000 (deputy manager)

These figures are a guide.

5. Working hours, patterns and environment

If you're working full-time, you'll usually work an 8-hour day, 5 days a week. Nurseries are usually open from 7am to 6pm. You may need to work Saturdays.

You could work in local authority childcare settings, privately owned nurseries, Sure Start Children's Centres and reception classes in primary schools.

If you're working with reception classes or at a [Sure Start Children's Centre](#), you could work from 9am to 5pm. Some jobs may be term-time only. There is also often lots of availability for part-time work.

The work involves a lot of physical activity, so you'll need a reasonable level of personal fitness.

6. Career path and progression

As an experienced nursery worker you could specialise in working with children with learning difficulties, physical difficulties or mental health problems.

You could also take a [level 3](#) early years educator qualification to progress to room leader, senior nursery worker or centre manager.

You could also study towards a higher education qualification in early years or child development. You could then move into management or early years teaching.

Related careers

You may be interested in:

- [Early years teacher](#)
- [Montessori teacher](#)
- [Nursery manager](#)
- [Health play specialist](#)
- [Nanny](#)