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Finding a Kita Place — Childcare in Germany

How to find a Kita place for your child. Legal entitlement, registration, costs, and alternatives.

Deutsche Begriffe: Kita | Kindergarten | Kinderbetreuung | Kita-Gutschein | Tagesmutter

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Legal Right to a Kita Place

Since 2013, **every child from age 1** has a statutory right to childcare. This applies to all children registered in Germany — regardless of nationality.

Types of Childcare

Type	Age	Description
Krippe (infant daycare)	0-3 years	Care for the youngest children
Kita (daycare center)	1-6 years	Full-time or part-time care
Kindergarten	3-6 years	Often part-time care
Tagesmutter/Tagesvater (family daycare)	0-3 years	Care in small groups (max. 5 children)
Hort (after-school care)	6-14 years	Afternoon care for school children

How Do You Find a Place?

1. Apply for a Kita-Gutschein

In many cities (e.g., Hamburg), you need a **Kita-Gutschein** from the youth office. You apply for it at the responsible district office.

2. Search for Kitas and Make Contact

- **Online portals:** Many cities have a Kita portal (e.g., "Kita-Navigator")
- **In person:** Visit nearby Kitas and get on the waiting list
- **Start early:** It's best to register 6–12 months in advance!

3. Interview and Enrollment

After an invitation to an interview, a contract is concluded. Orientation typically takes 2–4 weeks.

What Does a Kita Cost?

Costs vary greatly depending on state and city:

- **Hamburg:** Basic care (5 hours) free, additional hours depend on income
- **Berlin:** Free from age 1
- **Other states:** €0–400/month depending on income and scope of care

Additional: **Meal fees** (approx. €30–80/month)

⚠ Be Aware of Waiting Times!

In major cities, there are often **waiting times of 6–12 months**. Register your child as early as possible — ideally right after birth.

If You Don't Find a Place

- **Tagesmutter/Tagesvater** — often available faster than Kitas
- **Parent initiative** — parent-organized childcare
- **Legal action against the youth office** — as a last resort if your legal right is not fulfilled
- You can ask the youth office to **assign a place at another Kita**

Tips

- Language barrier? Many Kitas have **intercultural educators** — ask about it!
- Your child doesn't speak German? No problem — children learn the language playfully within a few months
- Ask a **counseling center** to help with the Kita-Gutschein application

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