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Kita — Kindergarten in Germany (How to Secure a Place)

How to enroll your child in kindergarten in Germany. Where to search, costs, and when to register.

Deutsche Begriffe: Kita | Kindergarten | Krippe | Tagesmutter | Kita-Platz | Kitabeitrag | Rechtsanspruch | Jugendamt | Betreuungsplatz | Kinderzuschlag

Types of Care

Type	Age	Description
Krippe	0–3 years	nursery
Kita / Kindergarten	3–6 years	kindergarten
Tagesmutter	0–3 years	childminder (small group)

After Kita, the child goes to school; many parents look for a place to return to work after Elternzeit.

Rechtsanspruch — Right to a Place

Every child from **completing their 1st year of life** has a **Rechtsanspruch** (legal right) to a childcare place, regardless of whether parents work, with a minimum of **6 hours per day** (longer if required by work/studies). You submit the application **not directly to the facility, but to the Jugendamt** (youth welfare office). If you don't get a place, invoke this Rechtsanspruch with the Jugendamt — if necessary, it can be enforced through the courts.

Costs (Kitabeitrag)

The **Kitabeitrag** (childcare fee) depends on the state and family income — in some states the final year before school is free. Families receiving Bürgergeld, Wohngeld, or Kinderzuschlag are usually **exempt from fees** (ask at the Jugendamt). A place in Kita often depends on your registered address — register early (Anmeldung) and enroll your child well in advance.
