



Tsukuba!

No. 2

October 2024

English



Topic: Day Care Center (*Hoikuen*) and Kindergarten (*Yochien*)

【保育所(園)と幼稚園について】

In Japan, facilities for preschool children include day care centers (*hoikuen*), kindergartens (*yochien*), and centers for early childhood and care (*kodomoen*). If you are expecting a child or have preschool children, you might be unsure about which facilities you can use or how to choose the right one. This issue will help address these concerns and explain about day care centers (*hoikuen*) and kindergartens (*yochien*).



What is the difference between *hoikuen* (or *hoikusho*) and *yochien* ?

Category	Day Care Center (<i>Hoikuen</i>)	Kindergarten (<i>Yochien</i>)
From what age can children attend?	From 0 years old until entering elementary school	From 3 years old until entering elementary school
Function	Provides daytime childcare for families who are unable to take care of their child due to reasons such as work, studies, pregnancy, childbirth, or caring for a family member.	Provides education for children before they enter elementary school
Childcare/Teaching hours per day	8 or 11 hours (in general)	Around 4 hours
Opening hours	7:30 AM - 18:30 PM (approximate) Varies by day care center	9:00 AM - 14:00 PM (approximate)
Type	Licensed (public, private) and non-licensed (private)	Public and private
Childcare fee ※Additional fees such as fees for learning materials and food will be charged. The total amount varies by day care center.	【Licensed day care center】 0-2 years old: Determined by Tsukuba City From 3 years old: ¥0 【Non-licensed day care center】 Determined by each <i>hoikuen</i> (Free of charge for households that meet eligibility requirements)	¥0

What is certified center for early childhood and care (*nintei Kodomoen*) ?

This facility combines the functions of day care center (*hoikuen*) and kindergarten (*yochien*).
・From the 3-year-old class onward, children can continue attending the same facility even if there are changes in their caregivers' situation, such as starting or leaving a job.
・Important point: The place to apply differs depending on whether you are unable to provide daytime care due to work or study or not. ※Refer to the flowchart (P4)

Day Care Center (*Hoikuen*)



The difference between licensed and non-licensed day care center (*hoikuen*).

A licensed *hoikuen* is a day care facility that meets national standards and is authorized by the prefectural governor. It operates using public funds provided by Tsukuba City.

	Licensed day care center (<i>ninka hoikuen</i>)	Non-licensed day care center (<i>ninka-gai hoikuen</i>)
License	Obtained	Not obtained
Requirements for caregivers	The caregiver is unable to take care of the child due to work, medical condition, or caring for a family member	Determined by each day care center
Where to apply	Tsukuba City	At the day care facility
Childcare fee ✕Additional fees such as fees for learning materials and food will be charged. The total amount varies by day care center.	0-2 years old: Determined by the municipality based on income From 3 years old: ¥0	Determined by each day care center (Free of charge for households that meet eligibility requirements)

Applying to Licensed Day Care Center (*Hoikuen*)

● If you want to enroll your child in day care center (*hoikuen*) from April, applications start in the fall of the previous year. (For example, if you want to use *hoikuen* starting in April 2025, applications will begin on November 1, 2024.)



● If you want to enroll your child in day care center (*hoikuen*) at other times of the year, please confirm the application period from the city's website.

April enrollment



Enrollment at other times of the year



[Important!]

★ You can enroll your child at other times of the year as well, but April typically has the most vacancies at day care centers (*hoikuen*).

★ You may not always be able to enroll your child in your preferred day care center (*hoikuen*) in Tsukuba City, as those in the city center are very popular. When applying, you can choose multiple day care centers (*hoikuen*), so it's advisable to select several options.

★ If you are unable to secure a spot in a licensed day care center (*hoikuen*), you have the option to temporarily use a non-licensed day care center (*hoikuen*) while staying waitlisted for a licensed *hoikuen*. (You need to inform the City Hall that you would like to stay waitlisted.)

Kindergarten (*Yochien*)

	Public kindergarten (<i>yochien</i>)	Private kindergarten (<i>yochien</i>)
Requirements for Parents	None	
Where to apply	Each kindergarten	
Usage fee *Additional fees such as fees for learning materials and food will be charged. The total amount varies by kindergarten.	¥0	Determined by each kindergarten

Enrollment in public kindergartens



Application for Public Kindergartens (*Yochien*)

If you wish to enroll your child in kindergarten in April, application begins in the fall of the previous year (around the end of October).

Please check the city's website for application details and required documents.

If the number of applications exceeds the number of openings, the following rules will apply

- ① Priority is given to a child who lives in the area designated by the city.
- ② If the number of children further exceeds the limit, random draws will be made.

For a kindergarten that has yet to reach its maximum enrollment capacity, it will accept applications for enrollment at any time during the school year.

Please contact the kindergarten of your choice directly for availability and enrollment procedures.

Steps to apply for Day Care Center (*Hoikuen*) or Kindergarten (*Yochien*)

★Step 1 Search for Day Care Center (*Hoikuen*)/Kindergarten (*Yochien*)

Imagine your child's daily life after they start attending day care center (*hoikuen*) or kindergarten (*yochien*) and consider which facilities you would be able to send your child to, for example, on your commuting route.

Also, you should check the policy and philosophy of the facilities.

The Childcare Institutions Management Division of Tsukuba City Hall offers consultation on childcare services by a childcare concierge. For details, please check the website.



★Step 2 Visit the Day Care Center (*Hoikuen*)/ Kindergarten (*Yochien*)

Visit the day care center (*hoikuen*)/kindergarten (*yochien*) you have shortlisted.

Contact the school in advance to enquire whether a visit is possible and make an appointment.



★Step 3 Prepare Required Documents

Prepare the documents required for the application.

Some documents may take time to obtain such as an employment certificate (*shuro shomeisho*), which you need to request your workplace to issue.

Start preparing as soon as possible.

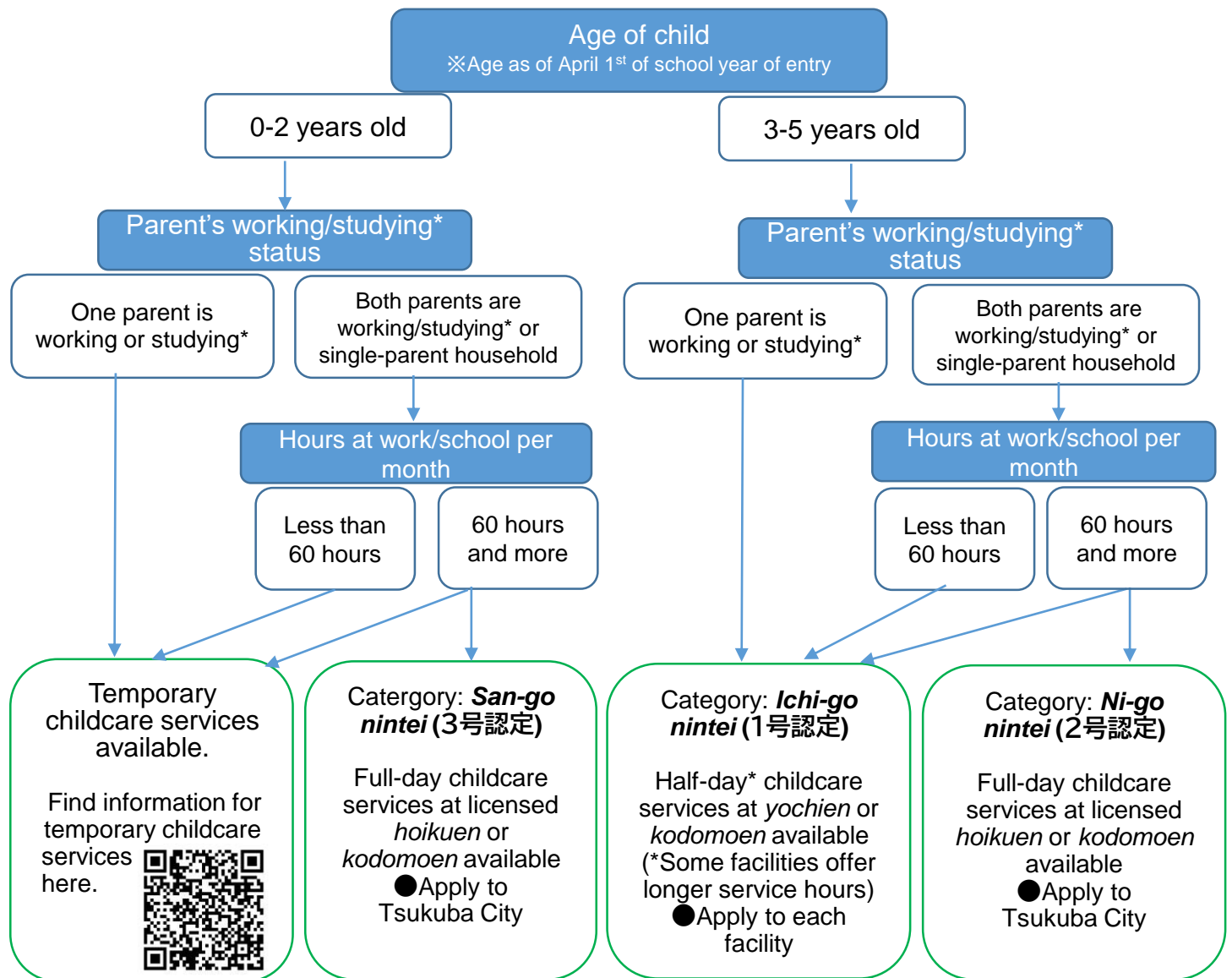
★Step 4 Apply for Day Care Center (*Hoikuen*)/ Kindergarten (*Yochien*)

You can apply online for licensed day care centers (*hoikuen*). If it is difficult to apply online, please bring the necessary documents to the Childcare Institutions Management of Tsukuba City Hall.

Please ask the respective facility for non-licensed day care centers (*hoikuen*) and kindergartens (*yochien*).

Day care centers (*hoikuen*)/kindergarten (*yochien*) flowchart

Please check which facilities you can apply to.



Services at non-licensed day care center are available to all households.
(Contact each center for more details)

*Note: Studying status applies to students at schools run by national and public institutions or by educational corporations. Please confirm in advance.

Note from translator/翻訳者から一言

Autumn in Tsukuba is such a beautiful season to be outside – much do to all of its colors. Golden rice fields, orange persimmons ripening in people's yards, fiery red *momiji* (maple) and vibrant yellow *ichio* (ginkgo) leaves, all contrasted against a wide blue sky. Why not take a walk or bike ride around the neighborhood to explore the colors that autumn brings?

秋のつくばでは、色鮮やかな風景を楽しむことができます。黄金の田んぼ、庭で実るオレンジ色の柿、燃えるような紅葉や黄色に輝く銀杏、そして澄んだ青空。近所を散歩したりサイクリングに出かけたりして、秋がもたらす美しい色彩を探索してみたいはかがでしょうか。

