



The Real Cost of Preschool in LA

A parent's plain-English guide to tuition ranges, hidden fees, free programs, and how to budget for early childhood education across Los Angeles County.

— Los Angeles • 2026 Edition



The Real Cost of Preschool in LA (2026)

A Parent's Guide to Tuition, Hidden Fees & Smart Budgeting

Choosing a preschool is one of the biggest financial decisions many Los Angeles families make. Tuition is only part of the picture; registration fees, supplies, meals, and extended care can add hundreds of dollars to your monthly expenses.

This guide provides a quick overview of average preschool costs across Los Angeles County, the factors that affect pricing, available financial assistance, and the key questions every parent should ask before enrolling.

Average Preschool Costs in Los Angeles

While tuition varies by neighborhood and program, most families can expect the following average costs.

Program	Average Cost
 Full-Time Preschool	\$1,250–\$1,430/month
 Part-Time Preschool	\$750–\$1,050/month
 Private Preschool	\$15,000–\$18,000/year
 Infant Care	20–25% higher than preschool





What Affects Tuition?

Several factors influence what you'll pay:



Child's Age – Infant and toddler classrooms require lower teacher-to-child ratios, making them more expensive than preschool programs.



Schedule – Full-time enrollment costs more than two- or three-day programs.



Neighborhood – Tuition is generally higher in central and coastal Los Angeles than in surrounding communities.



Program Type – Montessori, bilingual, STEM, and Reggio Emilia programs often charge premium tuition because of specialized curricula and lower class sizes.



Typical Preschool Costs by Area

Different parts of Los Angeles have noticeably different pricing.



Higher Tuition Areas

- Santa Monica
- Culver City
- Silver Lake
- Downtown Los Angeles

These areas often have longer waiting lists and higher operating costs, resulting in premium tuition rates.



More Budget-Friendly Areas

- Burbank
- Glendale
- Pasadena
- San Fernando Valley
- South Bay

Many families find these communities offer excellent preschool options with shorter waitlists and more competitive pricing.





Hidden Costs Parents Often Overlook

The advertised tuition isn't always the final monthly cost.

Before enrolling, ask whether these expenses are included:

-  Registration or enrollment fees
-  Annual supply or materials fees
-  Meals and snacks
-  Field trips and enrichment activities
-  Extended care or after-school programs
-  Late pickup charges
-  Holiday or scheduled closure billing



Knowing these costs upfront can help you avoid unexpected expenses later.



Free & Low-Cost Preschool Programs

Not every family pays full tuition. California offers several programs that can significantly reduce childcare costs.

TK

Transitional Kindergarten (TK)

A free public school program for eligible 4-year-olds that prepares children for kindergarten.



California State Preschool Program (CSPP)

Provides free or reduced-cost preschool for income-eligible families through participating schools and community organizations.



Head Start

Offers free early education, health services, and family support for qualifying families with young children.



Child Care Subsidy Programs

State-funded assistance programs help eligible working families pay for licensed childcare providers.



Tip for Parents

Check your eligibility each year — many families qualify but aren't aware these programs exist.





Tip: Even if you think your household income is too high, it's worth checking eligibility requirements before enrolling.



5 Questions Every Parent Should Ask

Before committing to a preschool, ask these important questions:



1 What is included in the monthly tuition?



2 Are there any additional annual or monthly fees?



3 Do you offer sibling or multi-child discounts?



4 How is tuition handled during holidays or school closures?



5 Do you accept state childcare assistance or subsidy programs?



These questions can help you compare schools fairly and identify the best overall value—not just the lowest advertised tuition.



Smart tip:

Asking the right questions today can save you thousands tomorrow.



Monthly Preschool Budget Planner

Use this worksheet to estimate your actual monthly childcare costs.

Expense		Your Estimate
	Tuition	\$ _____
	Registration Fee (Monthly Average)	\$ _____
	Supplies & Materials	\$ _____
	Meals & Snacks	\$ _____
	Estimated Monthly Total	\$ _____





	Extended Care	\$ _____
	Transportation (Optional)	\$ _____
	Estimated Monthly Total	\$ _____



Budget reminder

Don't forget to include one-time fees and seasonal expenses in your annual planning.



Final Tips Before You Enroll

When comparing preschools, don't focus on tuition alone.

Instead, evaluate:



What's included
in the tuition



Teacher-to-child
ratios



Curriculum and
learning approach



Safety and
licensing



Hidden fees



Financial assistance
options



Parent reviews and
communication



Sometimes a preschool with slightly higher tuition offers better overall value by including meals, enrichment activities, and educational materials that would otherwise cost extra.



Disclaimer

The tuition figures in this guide are based on publicly available market averages for Los Angeles County in 2026. Actual pricing varies by provider, program type, schedule, and location. Always confirm current tuition, fees, and financial aid options directly with the preschool before enrolling.

