The daycare daily sheet: paper slip or app, and when paper still works

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Paper daily slips and child care apps both tell families about the day. What each does well, what each costs, and the rooms where paper still makes sense at pickup.

A daily sheet tells a family how the day went: meals or bottles, naps, diapers or the potty, mood, and one thing the child did. A paper slip does that for the cost of a page, with no device at the door; an app adds photos, real-time updates and a stored record, for a monthly price or a free tier with limits. Paper still makes sense in a small room, a family child care home, or anywhere a phone at the changing table gets in the way. Peabody's daily report slip prints four to a page and is free through the end of 2026.

This isn't a post against apps. Many programs use one and like it. It is a plain look at what each way does, so you can pick for your room.

What both have to do

Whatever you use, a family at pickup wants the same few things:

- Did they eat, and how much?
- Did they sleep, and for how long?
- Diapers or the potty.
- How was their mood?
- One thing they did, so the car ride home has a question in it.
- Anything to bring tomorrow.

Peabody's slip has those rows in three versions. The infant slip has bottles, food, naps, diapers, mood and "please bring". The toddler slip has meals, nap, diaper or potty (with "tried potty"), mood, "today we" and "please bring". The preschool slip has lunch, rest, potty, "today we", "ask me about" and "please bring", and it names the week's theme and book from the theme planner.

What paper does well

- No device at the changing table. A tick on a clipboard takes two seconds and needs clean hands only.
- It costs a page. Four slips print on one sheet on a home printer.
- It goes home in the bag. A family who doesn't use an app, or shares a phone, still gets the day.
- Nothing to set up. No accounts for staff, no accounts for families, no records about children kept anywhere online.

What an app does well

- Updates during the day. A family can see a nap or a photo before pickup.
- Photos and video. Paper can't carry them.
- A stored record. Searchable by child and date, and kept for you.
- Check-in and billing in the same place, in many apps.

Prices vary a great deal. Some apps publish a free tier for a few children and a monthly price by enrollment; many ask you to request a quote. Our Top 10 of child care apps lists the published prices we read on each vendor's own page on 30 October 2026.

When paper still makes sense

- A family child care home with a handful of children, where you are the only grown-up and your phone is better in a drawer.
- An infant room where hands are busy and a clipboard by the changing table is faster than unlocking a tablet.
- A program where families differ in phones, data plans or languages, and a slip in the bag reaches everyone.
- A trial week before you decide on an app: paper shows you which rows your families actually read.

When an app may be worth it

- Several rooms and several staff, where a shared record saves hunting for slips.
- Families who ask for photos during the day.
- When you already use the app for check-in or billing, so the daily report is one more screen, not one more system.

What never goes on either

Medicine doses belong in your program's own medication log, which follows your licensing rules. Peabody's slips have no medicine field; each one ends "Medication: see our log", so a family knows where to look. Keep a child's full name and anything private off anything that might be pinned up or forwarded.

Try this week

Print a page of slips for your room from the daily report slip, clip them by the changing table or the lunch table, and tick as the day happens instead of at 5:25 pm. At Friday pickup, ask two families which line they read first. If the week's book is on the slip, it is one of Peabody's own stories, free to read at peabody.kids, so a family can read it again that night.

Three things providers ask

Is a paper daily sheet still allowed?

Many programs use paper. Whether a paper record meets your state's rules is a question for your licensing agency; Childcare.gov's state resources link each state.

How long does a daily slip take?

Filled in as the day goes, a few seconds a tick. Left to the end of the day, it takes far longer and gets less accurate, whatever you use.

Can I use paper and an app together?

Yes. Some rooms tick paper during the day and send one photo through an app. Use whatever your families actually read.

Last checked against Peabody's daily report slip on 30 October 2026.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/daycare-daily-sheet-paper-or-app