

Babysitters' Guide to Being Safe

Babysitting Basics

- Find out when the parents will return.
- Make sure you know where they will be and the phone number where you can call them.
- Write down the street address and phone number of where you are babysitting and keep copies of it near every phone.
- Have emergency phone numbers for police and fire near every phone.
- Include the number of a neighbor on your phone list.
- Ask parents about television, videos, video games, bedtime, play, and food rules for the children.

Before You Start

- Babysit only for people you know or who have been referred by a friend. Answering newspaper ads is not as safe as agreeing to sit for a friend of the family.
- When someone asks you to babysit, find out what time the parents expect to be back and tell them how much you charge and what time you have to be home. Discuss how you'll get there and home safely.
- Leave the name, address, and phone number of where you'll be sitting with your parents or a trusted friend. Tell them what time your employer expects to be home.
- Before the parents leave, have them write down the name, address, and phone number of where they will be.
- You should know emergency phone numbers like 9-1-1 and the poison control center.
- Have the address of where you are babysitting next to the phone.
- Make sure you have a neighbor or relative and the family doctor's phone numbers in case of an emergency where you can't get a hold of the parents.
- Be sure you know the locations of all phones in the home in case you need one quickly.
- If there is an alarm system, learn how to use it.
- Know how to work the window and door locks in the house. Use them!
- Make sure to turn on the outside light.
- Ask about smoke alarms and fire extinguishers. If you are in an apartment, find out where the emergency exits are.
- Ask about the children's bedtimes, favorite toys and stories, and what they eat. Check on food allergies or medication.
- Find out what you are allowed to eat and drink.
- Get permission and instructions on using the TV, stereo, and other appliances.

On the Job

- Be sure to clean up after the children and yourself. Wash all dishes, cups, and utensils that you use, and put all toys back where you found them.
- Don't tie up the phone talking to your friends. Your employers may want to check in or call about a change in plans.
- A friend should not come over to keep you company unless your employer agrees in advance that it's okay.

In an Emergency

- If you suspect a fire, get the children and yourself out of the house. Go to a neighbor's or a public phone and call the fire department. Then call your employer.
- Stay calm. Children probably won't panic if you don't.

Special Tips for Daytime Babysitters

- If you have children out in the backyard, make sure the front door is locked.
- If you take the children for a walk or to the park, lock all doors and windows before you leave.
- Be sure to take the keys and some change with you in case you need to use a pay phone. Also, make sure you take your employer's phone number with you.
- Never take the children to a deserted park or out alone after dark. Be wary of strangers. If you feel uncomfortable in a situation, take the children and leave.
- If anything seems unusual when you return to the home, like a broken window, a ripped screen, or an open door, don't go in the house. Go to a neighbor's home or a public phone and call the police. A call to 9-1-1 or the operator is free.

When the Job Is Done

- Tell your employer if anything unusual happened, such as a strange phone call, noises, or a stranger at the door.
- Call your parents to let them know if your employer is going to be late coming home.
- Be sure you are escorted home. If your employer cannot walk or drive you home, or if he or she seems to have been drinking, ask someone from your family to come for you. Never go home alone at night from a babysitting job.
- If your employers are unreliable, always late, often intoxicated, etc., don't babysit for them anymore.