



## Finding a Sitter: Tips for Parents

If you are looking for an occasional babysitter, you might decide to hire a responsible adolescent from the neighborhood. Typically, this may be a teenager who is looking to make some spending money. Here are tips to keep in mind.



### Teenage babysitters: advantages & disadvantages

There is an advantage to having young people as babysitters, since they are generally energetic, playful, fun-loving and entertaining for your children. The disadvantage is that they may be less strict than you are with discipline, and they may not be experienced in handling problem situations.

If your child is close to 12 years old, you will need someone considerably older to babysit. A teenager only one or two years older is not likely to have much authority. Be sure to speak with the parents of any teenager you are considering hiring, to get a sense of how they handle responsibility. It is also a good idea to check with other families who have used the teenager for babysitting.

A good strategy is to develop a list of two or three sitters who know your child and can be called upon if your regular sitter is busy or ill. Make sure they all understand the rules that apply to sitting at your home regarding:

- Media use (</English/fmp/Pages/MediaPlan.aspx>) such as TV watching, internet usage and texting
- Substance use like smoking (</English/health-issues/conditions/tobacco/Pages/Dangers-of-Secondhand-Smoke.aspx>) or drinking (</English/ages-stages/teen/substance-abuse/Pages/Why-to-Have-the-Alcohol-Talk-Early.aspx>)
- Taking your child outside (</English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/default.aspx>)

### If you need a sitter on a regular basis

If you need a sitter on a more regular basis, you may need to employ an older person. Word of mouth, online agencies (including background checks) and local colleges are a few ideas to recruit people.

### Qualities to look for in a sitter

In general, the sitter you choose should be mature, reliable and friendly with children. They should be someone with whom your child enjoys spending time. As your child gets older, they should have some say in your selection of caretakers. Kids are very smart and have great intuition about people; respect their opinion.

### Interviewing a babysitter

Interview applicants thoroughly to get a sense of their reliability and competence.

#### Questions to ask:

- Ask them about other positions they have held
  - the ages of children they have cared for
  - what their responsibilities included

- How they would handle various situations (such as your child not wanting to do homework)
- Activities they enjoy doing with children

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If you think reading or singing to your child is important, look for a babysitter who enjoys these activities. Explain fully your expectations—for example, will the child care involve housecleaning? Ask for and carefully check references.

## Before your hire a sitter

If one person stands out among those you've interviewed, have them come for a "visit" while you are home.

- Introduce them to your child, and pay them for an hour of child care while you are home as well.
- Evaluate this first encounter in helping you determine if the person is a good fit for your family.
- Later, ask your child about the sitter, and be sensitive to their comments.

## How much to pay your babysitter

The hourly rate for babysitting varies from community to community. In general, pay should increase with responsibility and with the competence of the babysitter. Caring for multiple children or adding household chores to child care merits a higher hourly rate. In the weeks and months ahead, monitor your sitter and how they get along with your child. Give advice and suggestions, and reinforce their positive qualities and strengths.

## Au pairs

Some families prefer to hire an "au pair." Typically, this is a college-age person from another country who agrees to live and work in the United States for a specified period of time (usually one year). While an au pair can be expensive, they can bring cultural richness into your family. Recognize, however, that many of these individuals also need to be given support and assistance in adjusting to the United States. To find an au pair, use an agency that specializes in these placements.

## Arrangements with neighbors, family & friends

Some families develop cooperative arrangements with neighbors or family friends who also have children. The families take turns providing child care for one another. Even in these cases, be sure you are clear about the rules you expect to be applied to your children. It is also helpful to keep track of how much child care each family is providing, so no family feels that the exchange of service is out of balance.

## Emergency numbers

No matter what kind of sitter you select, make sure that the person with whom you leave your child has a list of all emergency phone numbers, including where you can be reached, and the names and numbers of trusted neighbors, relatives, and your child's pediatrician. Make sure to have 911 and the national poison control center number (800-222-1222) displayed on or near the phone at all times, or ask them add these numbers to their contacts.

**Click here** (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Babysitting-Reminders.aspx>) **for a complete list of babysitting reminders.**

## What if your child doesn't like the sitter?

What should you do if your child challenges the sitter's authority? First, find out exactly what happened, talking to both the child and the sitter. In many circumstances, it will be appropriate to stand behind the sitter; a united front aids the sitter's role as an authority figure. However, if your child expresses a dislike for a sitter, or protests when hearing who is going to sit, take your child's concerns seriously. Explore what the problem is, and remember that with regard to child care, your child's safety and well-being are top priority.

## More information

- Babysitting Reminders: Checklist for Parents & Sitters (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Babysitting-Reminders.aspx>)
- Why Quality Matters in Early Child Care ([/English/family-life/work-and-child-care/Pages/why-quality-matters-in-early-child-care-aap-policy-explained.aspx?l=1%2a%2a%2aMTMyMzY1NDM2OC4xNTE1MTA1ODA3%2a\\_ga\\_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aMTY2MTUyNzAJS4xMDg4LjEuMTY2MTUyNzI3OC4wLjAuMA..&\\_ga=2.75833682.67673449.1661181047-](/English/family-life/work-and-child-care/Pages/why-quality-matters-in-early-child-care-aap-policy-explained.aspx?l=1%2a%2a%2aMTMyMzY1NDM2OC4xNTE1MTA1ODA3%2a_ga_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aMTY2MTUyNzAJS4xMDg4LjEuMTY2MTUyNzI3OC4wLjAuMA..&_ga=2.75833682.67673449.1661181047-))

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4lDXGyOscbjQ09X58czvk-qyRx2KeH5SBoCP\_QQAvD\_BwE) [Back to Top](#)

- [Family Media Plan \(/English/fmp/Pages/MediaPlan.aspx\)](#)

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