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Dedicated to
Mandy and Mikey McLellan,
my beautiful babies,
who truly fill my world with happiness
every day!

Seven Things to Know Before You Hire That Babysitter

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Whether you are a bank executive, a homemaker, a stock broker, or a grocery clerk, if you have children, you will probably need childcare at some point during your life as a parent or guardian. If you are not fortunate enough to have a trusted family member nearby willing to care for your children then here are the

Seven Things to Know Before You Hire That Babysitter

(and why they matter!)

As a mother of two, professional sitter, former pediatric mental health counselor, and former daycare owner, I have been involved with childcare on many levels. Caring for children is not just a job for me, it's something I love to do – it's my life. Over the years I have learned much about children: how they think, what they like to do, and how they should be cared for. I, too, have made mistakes in choosing sitters, but learned from those mistakes. I have compiled all that I've learned into this e-book in hopes of helping others enjoy a more positive childcare experience. Selecting the best babysitter to suit your needs involves many considerations.

Also included are many tips you may find useful after you hire that babysitter, beyond just emergency phone numbers, to leave with the sitter when you go out. As a professional sitter, I have found that many unpleasant babysitting experiences could have been avoided if I had only had a little bit more information. At the end of this e-book I have included a sample "Information for the Sitter" sheet that you can print for your own use or use as a reference when creating your own version. It will answer many questions in advance and will avoid potential problems.

While I do understand that childcare providers/babysitters can be either male or female, I believe that the vast majority are female. Therefore, for the ease of reading, the pronouns "she" and "her" are used in this e-book when referring to the babysitter.

The Most Important Questions to Ask

#1

Do You Know the Potential Babysitter's Full Name and Address?

Although getting a sitter's full name and address may seem obvious, believe it or not, it can be easily overlooked. Imagine this scenario for a moment: a mother calls up a friend and asks her if she knows any nice, reliable girls that baby-sit. Her friend says, "Yeah, Brittany baby-sits." The mother asks, "Brittany?" Her friend replies, "Yes, you know, the girl with the long blonde braids that used to work at Little People's Daycare. She's really sweet, comes from a good family, and my kids just love her. We've used her for two years." The mom takes her phone number, gives her a call, and she baby-sits for her two or three times. If Brittany was a stranger off the street the mother's parental instincts would kick in and she would certainly have asked a lot more questions. But, the fact that this was a reference from a trusted friend gave her a transferred sense of trust.

I once had a sitter for 2 months during which time she watched my kids three or four times before I realized that I didn't even know her last name. At the time, life was overwhelming me. I had gone from wearing suits and heels and working for a large corporation to being a prisoner in my own home [running a family daycare](#) 12 hours a day while pregnant and caring for my own two-year-old. So, things like getting the babysitter's last name was not at the top of my "things to do" list. She was nice, my daughter loved her, and she was very reliable; that was all that seemed important. I misplaced her phone number somehow, and then couldn't even look it up in the telephone directory because I only knew her as Sara. Be sure to get first and last name, address and phone numbers. If the sitter is under 18 you should get her parent's names as well, and it would be a good idea to meet them.

Be sure to either put her phone number right into an address book or put it in a handy location. With the growing number of blended families, more and more children have different last names than one or both of their parents making it tough to find their phone numbers in the telephone book or by using directory assistance.

#2

Does the Sitter Have a Cell Phone?

Nowadays, most people have cell phones. You may want to ask the potential sitter if she has a cell phone and if it is ok to contact her on it if you are unable to reach her at home. In many homes, it is often the case that someone will check the messages on an answering machine, but forget to relay the message. Even if a family member does write down the messages for others, it is possible that the information is incorrect because they didn't hear it clearly, or once written down, the message may get misplaced.

Many times I have ended up not being able to attend a function or follow through with plans because I was waiting for a call back from a sitter only to find out she never got the message. So a sitter's cell phone number can be a handy thing to have.

Additionally, if your sitter has a cell phone, then contacting her while she is sitting for you is simplified. Think about whether or not you want your sitter to answer your home phone. Many people have answering machines and would rather have the machine take the message. This is a good idea to avoid mistakes in messages and also if the sitter is young it will avoid letting anyone know your sitter is there alone with your children.

But, what if you need to contact the sitter while you're out? If your machine answers silently, how will the sitter know when it is you? If you don't have caller ID, you could have a signal for the sitter so she would know to answer the phone. For example, you could let it ring once, hang up, and call back again in 30 seconds. But, if the sitter has a cell phone, then the simple solution would be to call her on that phone.

Another advantage to the sitter having a cell phone is that you can contact her while she is caring for your children outside of your home. Most people who carry cell phones tend to keep their cell phones on them or close by such as in a purse or jacket pocket. So, if the sitter were in the backyard with the children or at the playground you could still get in touch with her.

Aside from the fact that you could contact the sitter wherever she may be, if the sitter has a cell phone, she can contact you if she needs you, or appropriate assistance if she has an emergency. Suppose her car broke down while she was transporting your children to or from home, or what if your child was injured on the playground or wherever she has taken them. A cell phone would be a very important piece of equipment for her to have.

Be sure to leave a list of all the important numbers where the sitter can find them. If you have them hung on the refrigerator or on a bulletin board, make sure you remember to point them out. Even an adult sitter needs to know where the important phone number list is. Although in many areas you can simply dial 911 in an emergency, some towns still have separate numbers for the police and fire station.

The number for poison control (1-800-222-1222)* should also be included on that list, as well as a phone number for a next of kin in the unlikely event that something happened to you while you were out. And of course, leave your [cell phone](#) number if you have one or a number of where you will be. Be sure that you also leave a small list of important numbers that can fit in the sitter's pocket so that she can contact you or the appropriate emergency personnel if necessary while she is out with the children.

*This is a nationwide number that will route your call to the nearest poison control center according to your area code and exchange. It is accessible 24 hours a day in the 50 US states as well as the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

#3

Does the Sitter Drive?

You need to decide if you will allow the sitter to take your children out of the house or not. Do you live in an area that has ample sidewalks or paths so that she may take the children for walks? Would you rather she stayed in the house with the children or in your own backyard? Is there a playground within walking distance and if not, is she allowed to transport them via her vehicle?

Some parents would rather the sitter use one of their vehicles to take their children on an outing. This may be for several reasons. First, they may feel safer because they know the current condition of their [vehicle](#) and how reliable it is. Second, if the children are small they may have car seats that are built in or semi-permanently installed. Third, the parents may feel like they have to reimburse the sitter for [gasoline](#) and so they would just prefer that she use their car.

While we are on the subject of driving, let's talk about some other important questions to ask and why. Obviously, if the potential sitter is under the age of 16, she won't be driving herself to your house. If she lives close enough to walk you need only be concerned with escorting her safely home especially at night. If you live in the city and the sitter will be using public transportation to travel to and from your home, you'll need to take note of schedules so your sitter doesn't leave your home at say 11:05 p.m. and is then left waiting for a bus or train until 12:00a.m.

It probably is not a good idea even for an adult sitter to be waiting for a bus alone at night. For some people it's hard to believe that not all adults own a car or even have a driver's license. Neither my mother nor my father ever owned an automobile. We lived in the city where public transportation was easily accessible. My mother eventually got her driver's license at about age 42 for identification purposes, but to this day she still takes public transportation wherever she needs to go.

Ask the potential sitter if her parents or a family member would be driving her to and from your home when she is sitting for you, or will she need you to transport her. If a family member is doing the transporting, ask how late she is able to baby-sit. For example, although she may technically have a curfew of 11:30p.m., she may only be able to sit until 10:30 due to the fact that a family member is staying up to pick her up when she is done. If you like to stay out late, this could be an issue. So to avoid a problem or an embarrassing situation, discuss late return times up front.

If you will be doing the transporting, here are a few things to keep in mind. First, if you drink alcohol, carefully consider your alcohol consumption while you are out before driving the sitter home. Some people feel comfortable having a couple of drinks and driving home while others feel you should not operate a motor vehicle after consuming any alcohol at all. If you feel comfortable driving after having a couple of drinks, be sure the sitter (or her mother if she is not an adult) understands that this is how you feel. Then, if they are not comfortable with that idea, they can make other transportation arrangements. If you don't drink or you always have a designated driver then this is a non-issue for you.

Next, if you and your spouse are responsible for transporting the sitter to and from your home, and alcohol consumption is not an issue, you may need to think about which of you is the appropriate person to be driving the sitter back and forth. Although hopefully you find a completely trustworthy sitter, you may want to avoid any situation in which an adult male is alone with the sitter to prevent any false accusations of sexual assault. It is very difficult to clear your name after a sexual offense charge even if you are found innocent. Many people would still have their doubts. The chance of the sitter making false accusations like this is probably very small, but it is something you should carefully consider.

#4

Does the Sitter Have Experience?

While it is true that everybody has to start somewhere, you may not want to employ a “rookie” to care for your infant. I made this mistake once and I still feel guilty whenever I think about it. My daughter was 3 and my son was 7 months old. My husband and I had not been out much at all, just the two of us, since before my daughter was born. We didn’t have a sitter and everyone we asked for a referral happened to have the luxury of having family close by to help them out. At that time, nobody could recommend a reputable sitter. I didn’t have any family closer than a 45-minute drive and my husband’s parents spent 10 months a year in Florida.

We finally posted an ad at my daughter’s dance school hoping that one of the teenage girls who danced or taught there might respond. The only response we got was from an eleven-year-old dance student named Meghan. When I called her, she was very polite and told me she had taken a course in babysitting. I also spoke with Meghan’s mom and she assured me that her daughter was responsible and verified that she had taken the babysitting course and also had experience taking care of other children in their neighborhood.

Having been a babysitter myself when I was eleven, I assumed that she could handle the job. When I was just 10, I became an aunt and my new baby niece meant the world to me. I learned quickly all about caring for babies and enjoyed it immensely. Even changing dirty diapers didn’t bother me; it actually made me feel grown up. I was a trustworthy and responsible babysitter by eleven. Also, being the youngest of six kids, it was finally my turn to be in charge and be responsible for someone else; a job I took very seriously.

It was a warm summer evening and my husband and I just wanted to go out to [dinner](#) alone for a couple of hours. When Meghan’s mom dropped her off at our house at about 5:00p.m., she asked if it was ok for Meghan’s friend Samantha to come along. Although I had already made it clear that we didn’t allow friends to accompany our sitters, she asked if it would be ok just this once since it was in the evening and she had already told Meghan that Samantha could sleep over before Meghan accepted the job. Reluctantly, I agreed (mistake #1) that just this once I would allow Samantha to stay.

Meghan’s mom left and my husband and I introduced the girls to my daughter. Next, we briefed them on where the phone was in case of emergency, where the toys were, what snacks were appropriate for my daughter, etc. My [son was sleeping](#) upstairs in his crib. I

quietly brought the girls up and showed them where he was. I told them not to worry that he would probably sleep the whole time (mistake #2). My husband and I left for dinner believing that these girls were quite capable of caring for the children for just a couple of hours.

Approximately two hours after we left for dinner we returned home. Upon entering the house, I found my daughter downstairs playing by herself, Samantha getting herself a snack in the kitchen, and Meghan running upstairs. When Samantha noticed my husband and I come in, she quickly ran upstairs also. I asked my daughter if she had fun with the girls. Then suddenly Samantha came running back downstairs and said, "Meghan needs you!" So I headed upstairs right away.

All I could hear when I reached the top of the stairs was my son wailing. Meghan was standing next to the crib as I entered the room and she said, "I think there's something wrong with the baby because he's all red and really hot." I picked him up immediately and he was indeed very hot and his face was extremely flushed. I needed to tend to the baby so my husband went downstairs with the girls, paid them, and Meghan's mom picked them up.

I continued to console my son and he finally stopped crying and his face returned to its normal color. Suddenly it struck me that I couldn't hear my son crying when we came in the front door. Why hadn't I heard him loud and clear through the baby monitor? I went downstairs and found that the receiver to the baby monitor had been unplugged. I ran back up to his room and found that the transmitter was shut off.

The baby monitor had been running non-stop since the day my daughter was born. We never shut it off. Immediately I felt sick. I asked my daughter if she knew why the monitor was off. She said right after we left the baby woke up. When he started to cry the girls didn't know what to do so they just left him in his crib. The crying was coming through the baby monitor downstairs and she said it was making the girls mad so Samantha unplugged it. My daughter said they could still hear the baby crying through the monitor even though it was unplugged. I knew this was possible because the receiver had a battery back up in it so it wouldn't have shut off when they unplugged it. Next, my daughter told us that Meghan went upstairs and shut off the transmitter and let the baby cry until we got home.

I called Meghan the next day to ask her about the monitor in case there was some other logical reason for shutting it off that I didn't think of. Her mom answered the phone and said Meghan wasn't home. When I explained why I was calling, her mother got very upset and said she'd speak to her. A few hours later her mother called back and apologized profusely for her daughter's actions, said she was being punished and that she was no longer allowed to baby-sit for me.

Apparently, Meghan did have experience babysitting, but had only cared for children over the age of three. This was an important piece of information that we never asked for. As you probably already know, there is a world of difference between caring for an infant and caring for a preschooler.

While my child wasn't injured (thankfully), it was a very upsetting experience. And so, I learned that just because somebody has experience babysitting, does not mean that they've had experience with kids of all ages – always ask!

I don't mean to say that you shouldn't hire a sitter because she's only cared for 3 and 4 year olds and your child is 2. But, if she doesn't have experience with your child's age group, you might want to give her a little more detailed information or maybe a little "training" if another sitter would be hard to find. Perhaps you could have her first come over a few times while you're home and work as a mother's helper for a few hours at a reduced rate of pay until you're confident that she can care for the children alone.

If your potential sitter is an adult, you still need to know her level of experience. Does she have her own children? Did she have younger siblings that she cared for growing up? Has she ever worked with children in a school or childcare facility? Just because she's an adult doesn't mean she automatically knows how to care for children. If you ask a sitter if she has experience caring for children and she simply says "yes," ask her to elaborate and get the ages of the children she has cared for and how many she has cared for at one time.

At the end of this e-book is an employment application for potential sitters. You can print it out or use your own. If you put together one of your own, aside from asking about her level of experience, be sure to ask why the applicant is interested in a babysitting job. You'll want to know if she is babysitting just for the money or if she really enjoys caring for children. There is usually a big difference between the two in the quality of child care you receive.

Also, in addition to asking about her experience, you might want to ask her if she has any knowledge of first aid and/or CPR. If she does, find out if she has pediatric CPR training as opposed to just adult training as the two are quite different. Her certification card should specify this. If she does not, but you are still interested in having her work for you, you might want to either get her an instructional booklet or at least find some information on-line that you could print out laminate and leave by the telephone.

#5

Is the Potential Babysitter Trustworthy and Reliable?

Don't be shy about asking for references. This is the best way of getting an idea of what kind of sitter your potential babysitter is. When you contact a reference ask several questions. For instance, ask how well their children like this sitter, is she on time, is she reliable, how often does she sit for them. You are leaving your children's lives in someone else's hands, so the more information you have about that person, the better. It might even prove helpful to ask why she is applying for a babysitting position as opposed to applying for a position as a sales clerk or restaurant staff. As I mentioned before, it's nice to know if she really enjoys working with children.

In addition to checking references, you may even want to do a [background check](#). If the potential sitter is a young teen, it probably isn't necessary, but for older girls and adults it may be very helpful. Background checks reveal information such as prison records, sexual offender records, DUI and DWI records, criminal records, address verification, fraud records etc. This type of service can also be used to check out teachers, coaches, bus drivers or anyone who may have regular contact with your child.

After you have checked out a potential babysitter to your satisfaction give them a shorter trial job to begin with. Go out for just a couple of hours when the children will be awake for at least part of the time. Then ask lots of questions when you get back. It is probably best not to ask the sitter questions in the presence of the children if they're still up when you return or vice versa. Most adults would probably be very forthcoming with information about the experience, but many teens can be shy and uncomfortable at first so you may need to probe.

Instead of asking how things went, try asking if the children ate their dinner, did they cry when you left, what games did they play or how did they spend their time, etc. If you want to ask how well they behaved, you may have to be more specific here too. You could ask about situations where there could have been a problem like did they go right to bed or did they continue to ask to watch TV, did they play nicely with each other. Some sitters were children themselves not too long ago and they often feel like they're "tattling" if they report on poor behavior. Assure the sitter that you won't punish the child for less than perfect behavior, but you will discuss it with them so that it doesn't happen again.

If your children were asleep when you returned, ask them in the morning if they had fun. Children are not often shy about relating stories to their parents but sometimes they too may need to be asked specific questions. Without saying "The babysitter said _____, is this true?" Try to ask questions to see if stories match so that you can get an accurate picture of the babysitting experience.

#6

Does the Sitter Have a Curfew and When is She Available?

Another important question to ask a potential babysitter is what her availability is like. Does she have another job? If you've gotten great responses from her references, she is probably well liked and could possibly be babysitting for 5 or 6 other families. She may only be available once in a while. By mid-September, I am usually booked every Friday and Saturday night until Christmas and several weeknights in between as well. You should try to find at least 2, maybe even 3 sitters so that you have backup if one can't make it.

If the potential sitter works in retail, a [restaurant](#), etc. full or part time, she may be required by her employer to work a certain number of weekend hours per month. This information may be very helpful for you to know if the weekends were the most likely time you would need her to sit for you. Ask her about her availability during the times that you anticipate needing her the most.

Check to see if the potential baby-sitter is involved in any other activities that may occupy a lot of her time? Often activities such as dance, cheerleading, swim teams, and other sports can involve quite a bit of time on weekdays and weekends as well. It would be helpful to get an idea of her social schedule too without getting too personal. School dances are often on weekend nights as well as many other types of parties or functions. If she dates, this may also consume much of the time you would need her to sit for you. She may be a fantastic baby-sitter but it won't help you if she's always busy when you need her.

Does the potential sitter have a curfew? This is a good piece of information to have upfront. My husband was out of town one night but I had already made plans to go to a charity fundraiser with some friends, which was about a 45-minute drive from my home. I had originally told my sitter that I'd be home by 11:00 and she said that was fine. Well, I was having more fun than I had expected and when I looked down at my watch it was already 10:45 and I was still at the function. This didn't seem like a big deal to me at the time, I assumed the babysitter wouldn't mind since she was getting paid – more time out for me meant more money for her, right?

Just as a courtesy, I called to let her know I'd be late. She then explained to me that there was a law (which I was totally unaware of) which stated that a "junior operator" was not allowed to operate a motor vehicle on the road between the hours of 12:00a.m. and 5:00a.m. A junior operator in Massachusetts is described as a licensed driver under the age of 18. She then reminded me that she still had a few more months to go until her 18th birthday.

Horrified at the thought that it would be my fault that this sweet girl had to break the law to get home, I ran out of the function hall, jumped in my car, and headed directly for the highway, only to find bumper to bumper traffic due to nighttime construction. Ugh! Luckily, she just lived a few minutes away from me and I got home at 11:55. Had I known about the laws regarding a junior operator prior to going out, I would have paid more attention to the time and left much earlier.

#7

Does the Sitter Smoke and Why Should You Care?

If you are a [smoker](#), you may not care if your babysitter smokes. If you are not, there may be a few things to discuss with the sitter if she is. First, where (if anywhere) is she allowed to smoke? Most non-smokers do not allow others to smoke in their homes, so a smoking friend or family member will step outside on a porch or deck to have a cigarette. You need to decide if this is an appropriate action for your sitter to take when she wants to smoke. If this person is taking care of your children, then it might not be a good idea to have her stepping outside to have a cigarette leaving the children unattended inside. Small children should never be left unattended; serious accidents can happen within a matter of seconds.

If you do not want your children left unattended at all, consider whether or not a sitter who is a smoker can smoke in the house and/or in front of your children. I am not a smoker and therefore I prefer that people do not smoke around my children at all. Not only am I concerned about the effects of second hand smoke, but also with the impression it might make on them. One Sunday afternoon when my daughter was 4 years old and my son was 2, we went to visit my sister who was a smoker at the time. I saw my children observing her closely as she took the package from her purse, removed a cigarette, brought it to her lips, lit it, and began to smoke it. My son pointed up at the cigarette between her fingers and innocently asked, "I try?" I found that disturbing and very upsetting.

If you do [smoke](#), and/or you are comfortable with your sitter stepping outside to have a cigarette now and then, you might want to mention where she should dispose of the cigarette butts when she's done. I have seen many smokers flick their butts out into the street, onto the sidewalk, and even onto a lawn without thinking twice about it. If this is not acceptable, you should specify exactly where and how the cigarette butts should be disposed of.

Those are the 7 most important things to know about a potential sitter before you hire her! The following pages contain many helpful hints, and even some suggestions on where to find a quality childcare provider.

Answers to Other Questions You Might Have

How Much Should You Pay the Babysitter?

Hopefully, your potential babysitter will let you know up front how much she charges. But, if she leaves it up to you to figure out, there are many variables to consider when determining the sitters rate of pay. First of all, you need to know the “going rate” for your area. If most sitters are getting \$10.00 per hour and you are only willing to pay \$5.00 per hour, your chances are slim of getting a sitter at all, much less a good sitter. To get an idea of the going rate, try checking childcare ads in the newspaper or on bulletin boards, or ask friends who either use sitters or have a daughter or relative that baby-sits.

Next, you need to consider the number of children you have and their ages. There should be a significant difference in the rate of pay between caring for one nine-year-old child and caring for four children all under the age of six. This also varies depending on the area you live in. An increase of \$0.25 per hour per child may be appropriate in your town, or it could be an additional \$5.00 or more per hour per child.

You should also keep in mind that if you ever have a situation where perhaps you go out with another couple and leave their children with your sitter as well, then for that night the sitter should receive additional compensation. Also, if you do plan to add extra children to your sitter’s workload, check with the sitter ahead of time to make sure she is comfortable with the number of children she’ll need to care for that night. Remember too that if you are [pregnant](#) or adopting another child, you will need to increase the sitter’s rate of pay when the new addition arrives.

Take into consideration the age and experience of the potential sitter as well. An eleven year old who is just starting out as a “mother’s helper” should not be paid at the same rate as an adult mother of three who makes dinner for your children, bathes them, puts them to bed, then loads the dishwasher and puts away the toys.

No matter what you come up with for a rate of pay, review it with the sitter prior to her first time on the job and be sure she is in agreement. Discussing fees can be very uncomfortable for some people, especially teenagers. I have asked every sitter I have ever hired, “what do you charge?” and almost every one of them has answered, “It doesn’t matter, whatever you want to pay me.” Now we all know that this probably isn’t 100% true. Any sitter would probably lose interest in sitting for you very quickly if you only paid them \$0.50 per hour.

Each sitter probably knows the hourly wage that she would expect or hope to be paid, but she is uncomfortable asking for it. So, be prepared with an amount that you would expect to pay. If you are really unsure and she is not forthcoming with a specific amount, ask her what she usually gets per hour, or how much do her friends charge for the same number of kids that you have and go from there. Putting the question that way usually makes it much easier for the sitter to come up with an amount.

In most cases, the old saying “you get what you pay for” holds true. My current babysitters get paid about one half to two thirds of what I get paid when I baby-sit. The reason for this is that I pay my sitters an agreed upon rate per hour and they do just what I expect. When I get home, any dishes or cups that they’ve used are on the table and the toys the children played with are on the floor where they left them before bed. I don’t mind because I have never asked them to clean up; I have simply asked them to play with the kids and they do. A raise would certainly be in order for any of my sitters who took the initiative to clean up after themselves and the children.

When I baby-sit for other families, I always try to go above and beyond what is expected. Being a mom, I know how much those little “extras” mean to both the children and the parents. I always play with the children, and often I’ll bring [crafts](#) for them to do, games for them to play, and books to read to them. Then, if the kids have had anything to eat I clean up after them and either wash the dishes or load the dishwasher or at the very least put the dishes in the sink. I will bathe the children if it’s ok with the parents, help with homework, and I always clean up the toys, and try to leave the house in the exact condition I found it in or in most cases better. All of my clients know they are getting much more than they originally expected.

I have increased rates from time to time for my babysitters for various reasons without them having asked. It is much less stressful for me to leave my children with a sitter when the children are excited and adore her, rather than when they cry and plead with me to stay home. After discussing it with my children, I realized that the sitters they liked the best were the ones that actually played with them as opposed to just letting the children play together while the sitter talked on the phone or watched television. So, the sitters who played with my kids got an increase in pay.

Also, some of my sitters began working for me in high school and I had to pick them up and drive them home. Once they had their own vehicles, I felt it was only right that I should give them an increase now that they would be paying for the gas and I would be enjoying the convenience of not having to transport them. If the sitter asks for an increase, then you would need to consider her request and decide for yourself if it is warranted.

If she doesn't ask, be sure to keep track of the "going rate" and possibly keep in line with it. A sitter will surely start losing interest in babysitting for you if she's making a few dollars less per hour than her friends are. And if you feel you are paying a premium price, don't be shy about asking for a little more from the sitter such as making a light dinner for the kids, cleaning up the dishes, picking up the toys that they've used, etc.

Keep in mind that if you use a sitter that has other clients as well, offering her a slightly higher wage may put you at the top of her list. For example, if the going rate is \$8.00 per hour and you offer her \$9.00 per hour, that will only cost you an additional \$4.00 for 4 hours out. But, you can almost guarantee that the babysitter sees this as a big increase and will make herself available when you need her. Also, if you are looking for a sitter for a popular night such as Valentine's Day or New Years Eve, you may want to book early and offer a higher wage for just that night. Many referral services require that on holidays you pay their sitters a higher rate (usually time and a half and sometimes even double the hourly rate). But even if you aren't using a service you might want to consider at least a small increase on those major holidays.

To get the current rate of pay for babysitters in your area, you can try using the [babysitter rate calculator](http://www.sittercity.com) at www.sittercity.com. All you need to do is enter your zip code, number of children, age of the sitter, and the number of years experience she has and the calculator will give you a pretty good idea of the appropriate rate of pay. The only draw back to this is that the rate calculator may not include your area at all. If this happens you may want to plug in a nearby zip code or one for another area or city that you feel is comparable to yours. However, if your area is not included nor are any surrounding towns or comparable neighborhoods, you'll obviously have to go back to asking friends or neighbors or checking ads to find out what the going rate is.

One more thing to keep in mind regarding paying the babysitter is if you like her and would like her to continue to work for you, then you should consider paying the sitter for a minimum number of hours. If you go out on a weekend night, the sitter is probably "giving up" her Friday or Saturday night to baby-sit for you. Maybe she would have been just watching television at home, but maybe she could have been out with friends, on a date, at a party, sporting event, or dance, or just spending time with her own family. The sitter may let you know if she requires a minimum number of hours but if not, you should consider paying her for at least three hours.

Where Can You Find a Babysitter?

Unfortunately, I was not one of the lucky people who always had family nearby willing and able to care for my children in my absence. So, after my first child was born, we brought her everywhere. She would just sleep in her baby carrier in restaurants or just look around. Once my second child was born, my husband and I began to get the urge to go out alone a little more often. Things were getting a little tougher now that my daughter was 2 ½ and my infant son wasn't nearly as cooperative in restaurants as my daughter had been. I began asking around but nobody seemed to use a hired sitter. Everyone I talked to had friends or family that would take care of their children free of charge.

I had mentioned earlier that I finally posted a sign at my daughter's dance school and the only response I received was from an eleven-year-old girl. Admittedly, I was a little scarred and guilt ridden after that experience, so we went several months before trying to find another sitter. Taking the advice of a friend, I posted an ad at the high school and got a response from a fifteen-year-old girl. She was very nice but she told me all sorts of outlandish stories so often that it made me wonder if I could trust her to tell me the truth in an important situation involving my children.

Then about six months later, I ran into a woman that I used to work with who had a fourteen-year-old daughter. I assumed that this one would be the best and surely I could trust her due to the fact that I knew her mom and she was a very reliable and trustworthy woman. Unfortunately, that one didn't last long either. Aside from the fact that she was inexperienced, I also found out that she slapped my son's hands one night because he kept dropping a toy over the edge of the tray on his high chair. She was too inexperienced to know that this is a game many babies/toddlers play. If you don't want to keep picking up what they've dropped, then you don't give the item back to them and you play something else. Slapping isn't an appropriate solution. A sitter should never be allowed to use any type of corporal punishment on your children.

Once again I posted a sign on the jobs board at the local high school. I figured that at least the last sitter I got from there wasn't hitting my kids. This time I got a response from a fifteen-year-old girl with a very bubbly personality and the kids liked her immediately. I told her as I had told all my babysitters before that this is a job, just like working in a retail store or a restaurant so she would not be allowed to bring friends. All went well for about four months until one night when I came home about ten minutes earlier than usual.

As I pulled up to my house, I saw a strange car in the driveway. On one other occasion this sitter had explained that a friend stopped by just briefly to drop something off to her.

I immediately assumed that this had happened again. However, when I opened the front door, the house was silent and there was nobody around. My first thought was that maybe she and her friend went upstairs to check on the children. So, I put my ear close to the baby monitor and heard only my child's breath.

When I realized they weren't up there, my next thought was maybe her friend smokes and so they were out on the back deck having a cigarette. As I was passing through the kitchen toward the back door, I caught a glimpse of the small spare bedroom to my right and it suddenly hit me! Oh no, could this really be happening in my house? Could the babysitter be in that bedroom with her boyfriend? I called out "Hello" truly hoping I would get no response. There was a slight hesitation and then I heard a small, sheepish "Hello" reply come from that room.

I didn't know what to do. I stood in the kitchen for what seemed to be an eternity waiting for them to come out. Finally, the babysitter and her boyfriend emerged from the bedroom staring at their feet as they apologized.

That was the last straw. I didn't think there was a babysitter left out there that I could trust. But fortunately, not long after, I finally found the most amazing young woman to baby-sit and we were thrilled. I had been running a daycare in my home at the time and I said half jokingly to the mom of girl who was in my daycare, "I can't wait until she's older so that she can baby-sit for my kids!" She was a sweet, kind, caring, smart, honest, and polite little girl. That was the type of person I wanted to have caring for my children. If only she were several years older. Her mom told me about a wonderful sixteen-year-old girl named Jennifer that baby-sat for her children occasionally. She gave me Jennifer's telephone number and I wasted no time contacting her.

She turned out to be the babysitter of my dreams! She brought [crafts for the children](#) to make, she built castles and forts with them, and played games with them. She was also always on time and very reliable. Knowing that children carefully observe those around them and mimic their behaviors, I was completely thrilled with this new sitter. She was absolutely wonderful; I never had any complaints. But alas, all good things must come to an end. She eventually went off to college.

Now I knew that in order to find a suitable sitter, I **needed** to get a referral from someone who had the same standards as I did and who had actually used the sitter herself. My daughter had switched dance schools and I had started taking a mother's dance class one night a week there as well.

After class one night, the topic came up about babysitters and I relayed my tale of woe. The owner of the dance school had a sixteen-year-old son. She told me that he had a couple of female friends that baby-sat and were both excellent sitters. One of the girls took care of the dance teacher's own two little ones all of the time and the other one would do it if the first one was unavailable, and she assured me that they were both great. I contacted the one she used less often assuming that she would be available more often. And to my delight, she was fabulous!

So, when searching for a babysitter, first ask around and try to get a referral. If you are asking friends, you are likely to get honest feedback and you will probably be able to get a lot of information before you even interview the potential sitter. You could also try the library. I wish I knew at the time that I was looking that lots of teens and even adults advertise there looking for babysitting jobs. Even local churches and houses of worship sometimes have areas where teens and others post ads looking for babysitting jobs. There are also [online referral services](#) which match parents or guardians to sitters in their area. If you interview someone who you didn't find through a personal referral, be sure to ask for references – and check those references carefully!

*Here are some listings of online services:

www.Sittercity.com – U.S.A.	www.Vipbabysitting.com - CA
www.Nannies4hire.com – U.S.A., Canada	www SeekingSitters.com – TX, OK, CO
www.Babysittingwhistler.com – Canada	www.MoreThanANanny.com – NY, NJ
www.eNannySource.com –U.S.A.	www.SunshineBabysitting.com - FL
www.Sittercafe.com - U.S.A.	www.AbsoluteBestCare.com – NY, NJ, NV
www.Smileys-childcare.co.uk/ - U.K.	www.GoNannies.com – U.S.A.
www.GreatAuPair.com – Worldwide	www.4Nannies.com – U.S.A.
www.Christiananny.com – U.S.A.	www.ANannyOnTheNet.com - Worldwide
www.Nanny-Agency.com – Worldwide	www.BestBear.co.uk – U.K.

*Please note that the above referenced online baby-sitting referral services are simply listings that we located on-line and are not necessarily recommended by BabysittingWorld.com.

Why Should You Use a Professional Babysitting Referral Service?

If you have the luxury of having a babysitting service in your area and can afford it, this may be the best way to go. A professional nanny/babysitting service usually does background checks and checks references on all its sitters. They also often require sitters to have certifications in First Aid and CPR for infants and children and they ensure that all are experienced in caring for children. In addition, some will guarantee you a sitter with as little as 24 hours notice. This is important in emergencies or for last minute engagements. Also, if your sitter is ill or cannot make it, the service will find you a replacement. Families that move to an area where they have no relatives would be able to find trustworthy, kind, and nurturing caregivers for their children immediately through a professional referral service.

Another advantage to referral services is that they can often provide you with sitters for a whole weekend or even for an entire week! This would enable your children to stay in their own home, sleep in their own beds, not miss any school or other activities, and have their lives basically uninterrupted while you bring your spouse along on a business trip or just enjoy a kid-free [vacation](#) or [romantic getaway](#).

Perhaps you have several children with the youngest being too young for a [theme park style vacation](#). A childcare service would be able to find you a warm, friendly, and responsible sitter to care for your infant or toddler while you enjoy the parks with your older children worry-free. And if you don't want to leave your little one at home for an extended length of time, you may be able to find a sitter through a [service in the town you are visiting](#) so that you can have the baby with you for part of the time and cared for by a professional sitter while you ride the rapids, go parachuting, or just fly down the largest roller coaster you can find!

Professional babysitting services can be found all over the country. If you happen to live on the south shore of Massachusetts, then you live in the area serviced by one of the most popular, reliable, and trusted baby-sitting services in the region. [Professional Sitters Referral Svcs., Inc.](#) has been providing parents and guardians on the south shore with quality child care professionals for over 15 years. In addition to owning and operating Professional Sitters Referral Services, Peggy Marshall is qualified by a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from Stonehill College; she is the owner of Little People's Country Daycare, and also a mother of four. Additionally, she has completed countless hours of volunteer work with children in many organizations such as Girl Scouts and the PTA, and worked as a teacher in the south shore Head Start program.

Professional Sitters Referral Svcs. conducts a personal interview with all of their sitters and can therefore match up the best suited sitters for each family. In addition to interviewing the sitters, they do a CORI check, check driving records, contact three references, and make sure that each sitter is also certified in First Aid and CPR. This extensive screening process gives all their clients peace of mind even on day one with a new sitter.

Additional benefits to using **Professional Sitters Referral Services** are:

- They can almost always get you a last minute babysitter.
- If your child is mildly ill and can't go to school, the folks at **Professional Sitters** can find you a sitter so that you can still go to work.
- If your current caregiver was not working out they could provide you with a replacement almost immediately.
- During your membership, you will have unlimited access to their professional sitters. Just call **Professional Sitters Referral Service** and they'll make all the arrangements!
- You are not obligated to only use their sitters; you're always welcome to use a private sitter or a sitter from another agency if you choose.
- Another advantage is that the rates are preset so you know what the cost per hour will be up front.

Professional Sitters Referral Svcs., Inc. is located in Kingston MA and can be reached at (781) 582-1691 or on the web at <http://prositters.tripod.com/>.

Another trusted babysitting service located in Massachusetts and serving the greater Boston area is [Parents in a Pinch](#). This award winning childcare service has been in business for over 20 years. All of their sitters are required to complete a thorough training course which covers health, safety, importance of play, etc. This training ensures that any sitter from this agency will provide you with the highest quality childcare available. But, if you'd still prefer to hire your own sitter, they offer a [Nanny Check](#) service to do a complete background check for you on any potential nanny/sitter that you are considering hiring. And, as if all that wasn't enough, they even offer corporate sponsored childcare.

[Corporate sponsored childcare](#) is becoming an increasingly common benefit in corporate America. It helps to build employee loyalty and cuts down on absenteeism by offering backup childcare on school vacations, holidays, when normal childcare arrangements fall through, or for mildly sick children who need to stay home from school or daycare. Employees whose companies are corporate clients of **Parents in a Pinch** receive priority and significant discounts for services.

As part of the corporate sponsored child care package, [Parents in a Pinch](#) also offers quality backup eldercare services. This valuable added benefit can be used for an elderly parent recuperating from an illness at home, awaiting an opening in an assisted living facility, needing a ride to a doctor's appointment, or just needing companionship while he or she is temporarily housebound. **Parents in a Pinch** covers corporate clients NATIONWIDE for backup childcare and eldercare.

Another benefit offered by Parents in a Pinch is [group childcare](#). If you are having a special event and will have a large number of children attending, Parents in a Pinch will send out the appropriate number of sitters (according to their adult to child ratio) and will set up an instant play center with toys and games to help keep all the little ones occupied and happy while the adults attend the meeting, wedding, or other function.

[Parents in a Pinch](#) offers several different membership packages, giving you control over your membership costs. The higher the membership level, the more benefits you receive. Some of these benefits include:

- Reduced referral fees
- Extended call-in hours
- Access to weekday sitters

And, if you only need a sitter once in a great while, they even allow non-members to use the service on evenings and weekends for a special one time referral fee.

www.parentsinapinch.com 45 Bartlett Crescent, Brookline, MA 02446, (617) 739-5437, Outside MA (800) 688-4697

What Kind of Rules Should You Establish For Your Babysitter?

When interviewing a babysitter, let her know all the rules up front. Upon hearing your rules she may decide that this job isn't for her, but that usually doesn't happen. Rules are much more easily modified when made more lax than modified and made more stringent. Some topics to consider may be things like whether or not friends are allowed over, which rooms (if any) are not to be used, appropriate channels on television for the children, computer use, telephone use, and correcting the children's bad behavior if any.

Depending on the age of the sitter, some rules may not be necessary to convey. When in doubt, it is better to lay down all the rules up front rather than have to have an uncomfortable conversation with the sitter later to let her know that her actions were not acceptable.

Some parents do not see a problem with a sitter bringing a friend along when caring for their children. Occasionally this works out fine and the children are still the main focus and all is well. The choice is yours. The reason I don't allow friends along is that babysitting is a job. Where I live, the babysitting rates are well above minimum wage. I feel that if I am paying someone more than they would make at the restaurant down the street or a clothing store at the mall, then I should be able to enforce at least the same rules. There are very few places of employment that allow employees to bring their friends to work with them. The sitter is there to do a job and I feel it is done best without the distraction of a friend. Also, it is often a small step from having a female friend over to having a male friend over.

I do know people who have allowed their older teen or college age sitters to have their boyfriends over while babysitting for them, but no matter what age they are I am just not comfortable with it. If one of my children happened to wake up in the night, I'm sure he or she would feel very uncomfortable if they came downstairs and walked in on the babysitter and her boyfriend even just cuddling or kissing. My house is my children's home and I don't want them to ever feel uncomfortable there for any reason.

Another reason I do not allow my sitters to bring friends is that I feel confident after the interview and checking references that I can trust the sitter I have chosen, but, their friends have not gone through the same interview process with me and so I usually know little or nothing about them. Too often I hear stories of items (especially jewelry) that suddenly become missing. The parents then have the unfortunate task of trying to decide how to handle this. Could the sitter have taken it? Could her friend have taken it? Is it just lost? The less suspects the better!

The next rule I have at my house that I also strictly observe when I baby-sit for others is the parent's bedroom is off limits. Unless it is part of your children's nightly routine to read stories on your bed or maybe they sleep in your bed, it might be best to keep your bedroom off limits with the door shut.

I once came home to the sitter and my entire house smelling strongly of my new and very expensive perfume. The perfume was kept in the medicine cabinet in the master bath off of my bedroom. There was no reason for the sitter to be in there as there were two other bathrooms in the house. It made me feel very uncomfortable that the sitter had been going through my private things. Why was she in there and what else had she touched? Now I was left with the decision of either not having her sit for me anymore or confront her and have a very uncomfortable conversation.

Another point of conversation you may want to have with your sitter is whether or not you mind if she falls asleep on your sofa if you are out late. Some people don't mind at all if the sitter falls to sleep. The way they view it is that as long as the children are asleep it's ok for the sitter to sleep. Their rationale is that the parents sleep while the kids do so what's wrong with the sitter sleeping. Other people who don't approve look at it as falling asleep on the job. They figure that they are paying the sitter to do a job and she can't possibly be doing it if she is asleep. This is a matter of personal choice; you decide what you are comfortable with, either way, remember to let the sitter know in the beginning.

If you have an adult sitter or you only get basic television stations, then having rules about appropriate television viewing may not be an issue for you. But, if you have satellite TV or some type of system where you get hundreds of stations including ones that are only appropriate for adult viewing, you may need to set some limits unless you have [parental controls](#) to deny access to these stations.

In some areas there is a pay per view option where you can order a television show or movie and the homeowners account is charged. If you happen to have this feature, let the sitter know whether or not she is allowed to order from it either for herself or for your children. As a sitter, I can't tell you how many times I've heard the phrase, "...but my mom always lets me!"

Think about whether or not you will allow your children to watch television while a sitter is there. If you allow them to, be sure the sitter knows which stations and shows are appropriate for them. Some kid's shows are geared more toward 10-12 year olds while others are definitely for preschoolers. Several four to six year olds that I've cared for including my own children were afraid of even cartoons that had ghosts or monsters in them. A younger sitter may not realize that a show for 10-12 year olds isn't really appropriate for little ones, so if it matters to you, you might want to leave a list.

One of the younger sitters I used one time, allowed my children to watch a Halloween special that was geared toward the 10-12 age group. Because she was so engrossed in the show herself, she didn't even see the horrified expressions on my children's faces. I was glad that I happened to come home only ten minutes into the show. I had told her before I left that if there were any children's Halloween specials on that the kids could watch them. I guess I needed to be more specific.

Definitely let the babysitter know what is expected of them. I ask the sitters to please play with the children. If it is near a holiday and there is a children's special holiday program on TV, then I let the sitter know that the children are allowed to watch that specific one. Other than that, I don't want my kids watching television while the sitter is there. I do let the sitter know that once the children are asleep, I don't mind if she watches TV for the rest of the night or if she talks on the phone until I get home.

Using the computer is another area of personal choice. You may not mind at all if the sitter uses your computer. I am confident that none of my sitters would look at any of our personal information or visit any inappropriate sites purposely. But, even an innocent search can bring up some not so innocent websites.

Also, many viruses and worms travel through e-mail and many people have web based e-mail addresses that can be checked from any computer. If the sitter is on my computer when she opens an infected e-mail, I have to hope that my [antiviral software](#) can disable it before it destroys my PC. Additionally, [adware and spyware](#) can attach itself to your computer without anyone's knowledge or consent just by visiting certain sites. So, I just shut our pc off before the sitter even arrives and let her know that I'd rather that the computer isn't used while we are not home.

However, if the sitter were to bring along her own laptop computer, I would have no problem with her working offline or even hooking up to the internet through our wireless network once the children were asleep. I don't think this would pose any threat to our computer or to our privacy.

One more thing to mention to your sitter is how to appropriately correct your children for "less than acceptable behavior." We all hope that our children are on their best behavior all of the time, especially in the presence of others including the sitter. But, sometimes a little sibling rivalry sets in, or displeasure at not being able to stay up late or whatever and it may cause tempers to flare and the need for intervention to arise. Even adult sitters need to know how you would like it handled. Most people know that corporal punishment is never acceptable but many people are not up to date with the appropriate way to handle poor behavior. Discipline is more about teaching a child than punishing him. A child should learn from his mistakes. Explain to the sitter how you would like these situations handled in your home.

How Can You Get Quality Childcare for Free?!!!

What other options do you have if you are either having a hard time finding a qualified sitter, you can't afford an agency, or maybe the cost of a sitter in your area is so much that you don't go out very often? Have you ever heard of a babysitting co-op? If there isn't already a co-op in your area, then maybe you should consider starting one! You may soon find many people like yourself who are very interested in becoming part of the group. It's easy and doesn't cost a thing! All you need is to be organized enough to keep an accurate record of the hours. At the end of this e-book you will find a sample page for keeping track of hours/points in a co-op.

Babysitting co-ops work like this; first you and say five other parents all get together in a group. You decide who will be the secretary first. The secretary holds this title for one to two months and then it rotates to the next parent or couple (or the position could be permanent if that's what you decide). The secretary's job is to keep track of each family's points. Points are earned by taking care of another member of the co-op's children. You could be very informal about the whole thing and just trade hour for hour, but, if you have four children under the age of six and another family only has one eight-year-old, they may feel cheated and possibly drop out of the group.

With a point system, you can make it very fair and attractive for another parent to care for your children. You could say four points for the first child per hour plus 2 points per hour for each additional child. Also, the parent who is the secretary should earn points for their term of service. You could even consider more points for hours of sitting after midnight, and additional points for feeding children a meal.

A co-op is a great way to have people you know and trust care for your children for free. It almost isn't even work, especially if your children are close in age and/or friends with the children you are caring for. It's like a play date that is earning you a free babysitter!

If you do set up a formal babysitting co-op, just be sure to set up all the necessary rules in the beginning to avoid confusion or hard feelings later. For example, if a member in the group has a negative number of points, they should have to bring their account up to zero before dropping out of the co-op. Negative points are points owed by a family who has had families watch their children but who have not taken care of another family's children in the co-op to earn points. Some will start out this way but should soon have earned points in their account. When developing a list of rules, consider the following questions: Will overnight baby-sitting be allowed? What will your "sick child" policy be? What will the criteria be for a new family who would like to join?

Helpful Information to Provide for the Babysitter

Why Would the Sitter Need to Know if You Have a Pet?

If you have pets, you should let the sitter know during the interview especially if you aren't conducting the interview in your home or in a room in your home where the pets frequently visit. The potential sitter could have a fear of cats or dogs and if she doesn't see them during the interview she may not think to ask if you have pets. Also, many people have [allergies](#) to one or more types of animals and could end up with a severe allergic reaction while caring for your children.

Many parents worry about the children getting sick or injured while the babysitter is caring for them, but few think about what will happen if the babysitter gets sick while caring for their children. Many allergy attacks can just cause the individual's eyes to itch and water, frequent sneezing, and scratchy throat. But, some allergic reactions can cause a serious [asthma](#) attack leading to emergency hospitalization.

If you do have pets and the sitter is fine with that, you may want to leave a few instructions regarding care of the pet. For instance, if you have an "indoor" cat, you would want the sitter to know not to let it outside. If you don't [feed your dog](#) from the table or allow him on the furniture, you wouldn't want the sitter to unknowingly help the dog start bad habits by calling him up onto the sofa or sharing her snack with the dog.

If your pet is allowed outside and has a signal for needing to relieve itself, you should make the sitter aware of that. Opening a door for a dog to go out is not really extra work for a sitter, but cleaning up an accident because she didn't know to open the door, is!

Children often like to be in charge of a pet and sometimes think they can handle things just because they've seen their parents do it. Be sure the sitter knows if a child is allowed to feed the fish, clean the hamster's cage, or take the bird, rabbit, guinea pig, etc. out of its cage to play. It might be best to have pets that reside in cages stay in cages while a sitter is in charge unless the sitter is very comfortable with handling the pet. And, feeding should be done ahead of time if at all possible.

Additional Information to Leave for the Sitter

Of course you would leave a list of all the important and emergency numbers; just remember to show the sitter where the list is. Even if it is posted right on the front of the refrigerator, don't assume that the sitter will see it. Be sure your address is written on that list as well. While the sitter may know how to get to your house, she may not actually know the street name or house number especially if you've picked her up.

In addition to leaving all the emergency telephone numbers with the sitter, be sure to show her where the flashlight and/or candles and matches are in case of a power outage. Most people don't think of this because it is not a regular occurrence, but think about how hard it is to find things in the dark and then imagine how difficult it would be to find something in somebody else's house in the dark especially if you have no idea where it is stored!

Many newer houses (and some older ones as well) have several bathrooms which can make it difficult for the sitter to find emergency supplies such as first aid creams and bandages in a hurry. Be sure to show the sitter where these items are kept and which items are ok to use. If you prefer that she only wash a cut and cover it with a bandage, let her know. If you would rather she wash a cut and use antibacterial ointment before covering it then be sure she knows where all the necessary supplies can be found.

If possible, it would be a good idea to have one shelf or drawer which contained all the over-the-counter supplies that you are comfortable allowing the babysitter to use on your children. It should even contain things like powder, sun block, bug repellent, anti-itch cream, aloe vera, oral numbing gel for teething babies, infant anti-gas drops, diaper rash ointment, etc. And, if you do have a [child in diapers](#), remember to show the babysitter where all the supplies are kept. Also, be sure the sitter knows how to use the diaper pail as there are many new styles on the market, each with its own unique system of making those dirty diapers disappear.

Remember to inform the baby-sitter of any medical conditions or allergies that your children might have. If you have an epi-pen, make sure the sitter knows where it is and how to use it. Epilepsy, Diabetes, and peanut allergies are just a few medical conditions that the sitter would need to know about. Even if your home is free of sugary snacks or peanut butter, the sitter may have her own snacks in her purse or jacket pocket. You probably wouldn't frisk her on the way in for dangerous snacks, so to avoid any accidents let her know in the beginning about any food related medical conditions.

While some children with peanut allergies simply experience non life threatening symptoms such as getting itchy around their lips and mouth, other children have trouble breathing in a matter of seconds after coming in contact with peanuts or peanut butter. Always instruct the sitter on the appropriate actions to take in case of a related accident/emergency.

Snacks – What, When, and Where?

Always let the sitter know ahead of time if any of your children have food allergies especially if the child is too young to understand and/or verbalize it him/herself. Let the sitter know what are appropriate snacks and drinks for the children, and at what time of day or night should they be allowed to have snacks.

In addition to which snacks are appropriate for the children, let the sitter know what food if any she is allowed to have. Suppose you've just baked cookies for a bake sale at the school the next day and when you get home, the sitter and the children have eaten half the plate! Oops. If you or someone in your household is [watching his or her weight](#), then there may be certain foods you would rather the sitter not touch because they are part of a special diet.

To prevent the sitter from possibly having to deal with a negative outburst over a snack, let her know how your children prefer their snacks prepared if they seem to be particular about that sort of thing. I have seen many children refuse to eat their favorite fruit because it wasn't peeled or sliced the way that the child prefers it.

The same is true for meals. If your sitter will be cooking or serving your children breakfast, lunch, or dinner, be sure to inform the sitter of any special instructions such as removing crust, slice the sandwich diagonally, use the plate with the bunny on it, dice the strawberries but leave the banana whole, etc.

Other related items to mention would be whether or not the children use "sippy" cups. Are they allowed to eat or drink in rooms other than the kitchen? Is it common practice to have dessert after a meal in your home? Do the children use knives to cut their own food? What drinks are allowed with meals? Are refills of drinks or seconds of an entree or dessert allowed? Any information you can give the sitter that will help eliminate or reduce possible conflict is extremely helpful.

Please Don't Forget the Instructions!

If there is any electronic equipment or appliances that the sitter will need to use, you should write specific instructions on either an index card or at least on a sticky note. These days nothing seems to be standard. I have seen everything from basic toasters to combination convection, toaster, and microwave ovens. Some have just a couple of dials while others have so many buttons and digital settings that you almost need an instructional course just to heat up a pizza.

The television will almost definitely need at least some basic instructions. I have babysat in at least 50 different homes and I have never seen the same set up twice. Some people have satellite TV, others have digital cable, some have entire home theatre systems, and most have 3 or more remote controls! Even if you choose not to allow your children to watch TV while a sitter is there, you should leave instructions so that the sitter can watch TV once the kids are in bed.

Another set of instructions that a sitter would be thankful to have would be instructions on how to control the temperature in the house. An air conditioner that is on high during the day would probably need to be turned down or off once the sun goes down. Likewise, in the winter if you have a programmable thermostat, it may be set to allow the temperature to drop very low at bedtime each night. If you happen to be out later than your normal bedtime, then the sitter is going to be awfully cold by the time you get home!

If the cost of heating fuel concerns you and you worry that the sitter may turn the thermostat up too high, leave a note stating preferred temperature ranges with the instructions on how to adjust the temperature. You could say something like, "Please feel free to adjust the thermostat to a comfortable temperature within the range of 66-70 degrees."

If you prefer that the sitter does not touch the heating or air conditioning controls, then you might want to let her know ahead of time that the house gets chilly at night (if that is the case) so that she will know to bring a sweater.

While index cards are a great place to write instructions, they are small and can easily get lost or misplaced. If you have several appliances or controls which need instruction cards, you could keep them together in a recipe box, a coupon envelope, or one of those small plastic photo albums that hold one 4 x 6 photo per page.

Thoughts and Ideas to Consider

What Makes One Less Chore for You While Creating a Fun Way For the Sitter and Children to Pass Some Time?

If you are comfortable with having the sitter bathe your children, this can be beneficial for all. For you, it is one less thing you need to worry about when you are trying to get out of the house. For the sitter, it gives her something to do with the children that most usually enjoy (once they get into the tub). A bath is a great way to pass some time especially if most of the time the sitter will be caring for the children is during their waking hours. And for the children, it is fun, relaxing, and a nice way to wind down and get ready for bed.

Since all children are different and are comfortable with different water temperatures, you might want to purchase a bathtub thermometer and write down what temperature is appropriate for your child(ren). I have a friend who simply put a tiny dot of nail polish on the shower wall next to the faucet where it should point for the correct water temperature for her daughter. She also put a tiny dot on the inside wall of the bathtub to show where the water should be filled to. Never assume the sitter knows these things, especially if she is young. What may seem like common sense to you, may be totally foreign to the sitter.

If you do choose to have the sitter bathe your children, leave explicit instructions for things like hair washing and rinsing, hair drying, brushing and/or detangling hair, etc. Some children love the warm water poured over their heads to rinse out shampoo while others prefer a very delicate rinsing process so that no water gets in their eyes or ears.

What if You Have Plans To Go Out and Your Child Isn't Feeling Well?

It isn't a crime to go out and leave a child who is feeling a little under the weather with a babysitter. However, if the child needs any medication and it can't be given beforehand, you should leave written instructions for the sitter. Remember that even someone who has sat for you many times before still has much to think about when they are caring for your children. Leave a measured medicine cup or dropper for liquid medicine. Regular flatware teaspoons or tablespoons should not be left for the sitter to use to measure medication.

If the medication is in pill form, be sure to let the sitter know if they are chewable or if they must be swallowed. Some people crush up pills that should be swallowed and mix them with juice or peanut butter if their children have trouble swallowing pills. Leave any specific instructions like this written down; it shouldn't be left up to the child to explain to the sitter.

If any other type of equipment is needed for an ill child such as a nebulizer, vaporizer or humidifier etc. written instructions should be provided. If medicine or treatment needs to be given at an exact time or if it is crucial that a dose is not skipped, you might want to set an alarm clock or the timer on the stove to help remind the sitter when it is medicine time. Even telling the sitter to administer the medicine or treatment "at bedtime" may not be such a great idea. Bedtime can often be hectic especially if your children don't go to bed easily. So, remembering an additional task which is out of the ordinary for the usual bedtime routine can easily be overlooked.

How to Help With the Worst Time of Night for the Sitter?

Most sitters will agree that bedtime is the worst time of the night. Be sure to fill the sitter in on bedtime routines. Who is allowed to sleep where? Are the children allowed to sleep in each other's rooms and/or in each other's beds? Do the kids bring a drink to bed? If so, in what type of cup? You may think this sounds ridiculous, but I had a five year-old little girl insist that her mother let her bring a large, fancy, glass goblet of milk to bed at night.

I really doubted that she was allowed to take that glass to bed. So, I told her that just for that night she needed to use a plastic cup and when her mommy got home I'd check with her about the glass. I explained that if her mommy told me it was alright, then the next time I would allow her to take the glass goblet to bed. Although I never imagined that her mother actually let her bring that type of glass (or any glass) to bed, when I checked with her mom, she assured me that it was indeed part of her daughter's routine and the fancy glass goblet was allowed.

Think about what other routines you would like the sitter to follow at bedtime. Will the sitter need to remind the children to use the toilet before going to bed? Do the children need a reminder to brush their teeth and do they need help with brushing? If you have a girl, does she wear accessories in her hair that need to be removed before bed? Do you have a toddler or even an older child that needs a pull on diaper just at bedtime?

Should the sitter read to the children or do they like to read on their own? If the sitter is the one to read the bedtime stories, where should she read (on the sofa, on one child's bed, on the living room floor)? Are the kids allowed to do anything in bed before they go to sleep such as watch TV, play handheld games, read, draw, etc.? If the child sleeps with a special blanket or stuffed animal, try to locate it and leave it in the child's bed so there isn't an all out search at bedtime possibly involving tears and/or a tantrum. The more little details that you give the sitter, the more pleasant bedtime will be for all.

Let the sitter know what things you give in on, if any. For example, if you allow your children to sleep in your bed but you'd really rather they didn't, let the sitter know to try to persuade them to sleep in their own beds first but if they put up a fight then it's ok to put them to sleep in your bed. Some people reading this may think that it is a terrible idea to give in on something because a child throws a fit. I would just like to mention that this is not my recommendation; I am simply relaying information so that each individual will inform their sitter of how situations are handled in their household, which will create a better baby-sitting experience for all involved.

Also, if you have a term for when “no” absolutely, positively means “no,” relay that to the sitter. Many parents can be in a bad mood because of a rough day at the office, an argument they’ve just had with someone, or maybe even because they’ve just broken a dish. Then, their child comes by and asks something simple like, “Can I watch television?” The parent may abruptly answer, “NO!” because he or she was not in a very good mood at the moment. But then the parent realizes after the child begs and pleads that there really isn’t any reason the child can’t watch a TV show at that time. So then the parent says, “Ok.” This is the sort of thing that makes children continue to ask for things time and time again after they’ve been told “no.”

So, many parents have come up with a term which their children understands means no, it’s absolutely not open for discussion, and their decision will not change. In our house, when no really means no, I say “One hundred percent no!” I’ve heard other people say, “No, and that’s final!” A friend of mine simply says, “No, and I mean it!” If you have such a term in your house, it would be wise to share it with the babysitter.

Should the Children be Allowed in the Pool While Being Cared For By a Babysitter?

This question is only included in this e-book to remind you to decide ahead of time whether or not you will allow your children to swim in your pool or anybody else's while being cared for by a sitter. And, if you own a pool and choose to allow the kids to swim under the sitter's supervision, be sure to leave written rules and/or instructions regarding anything having to do with the pool. A list of rules might include a specific amount of time to wait after eating before swimming, diving board rules, who is or isn't allowed in the deep end, do the children need to shower off before or afterward, are pets allowed in the pool, does any child require a life vest or flotation device (even if he or she doesn't think they do), etc.

Babysitter Gifts and Bonuses

Most babysitters don't expect any type of gift or bonus. This is definitely a personal decision and you should never feel obligated to give a gift or to pay the sitter any more than she's earned. However, if you choose to reward her monetarily for a job well done either as a holiday gift or perhaps annually on the anniversary of when she began working for you, some things you might take into consideration are how long she has worked for you, how often she works for you, and how pleased you are with her service.

There are many [gifts under \\$10.00](#) that you could purchase for the occasional teenage babysitter just to let her know she was thought of on the holidays. For the full or even part time nanny, some parents have chosen to give a slightly larger gift or even a cash bonus which I'm sure would be very much appreciated. Again, this is a personal decision and is not being recommended one way or the other. The information is only intended to be an option to consider.

A great gift for the sitter (that would also benefit you and your children), would be the *Babysitter's Survival Kit*, or *How to Become the Babysitter Most Parents Prefer* e-book, or both. The [Babysitter's Survival Kit](#) contains a flashlight, first aid kit, appointment book, and more. And it all comes inside a handy tote bag that has enough additional space to fit books, games, and anything else the sitter may need. [How to Become the Babysitter Most Parents Prefer](#) is like an instruction manual for babysitters that includes tips and strategies for making every babysitting experience a pleasure for both the children and the parents/guardians as well as for the sitter herself.

“IF YOU’VE GOT A KID, YOU NEED A BABYSITTER”

Lisa has shown you everything you need to know about your babysitter. As a psychotherapist who has seen hundreds of couples with children, I have only one basic idea to hammer home as an addition to her book. It is one simple truth—if you’ve got a kid, you really need a babysitter.

There are a lot of things you need if you are a couple. As the days go by and the years toll on, what you will need more than anything is time and energy. This is where a babysitter comes in handy. They give you the time so you can make time for yourselves as a couple and as individuals. This is an obvious truth—but it is one that you will take for granted as everything slowly and subtly invades and takes away the time you could use for a date.

After all, a date together is expendable. It can be put off and put off as you work a little longer, visit Grandma once again, have friends over, or go to another church meeting. It can be put off as you save for a rainy day by not spending the money on a babysitter. It can be put off as you “don’t feel like going out” because you are tired, secretly mad at one another, or can’t think of anything to do. And the years go by.....

And as those years go by another thing is happening that is the biggest enemy of marriage. And that enemy is familiarity—the so getting used to your partner that you barely see them as the fresh, unique, loveable ensemble you once fell in love with. You remember the good old days when a kiss would ignite the world and the glimpse of a bare shoulder would excite the poetry in your soul and body. But now, as the jaded days do their number, you don’t even look for a bare shoulder or linger for a kiss. You remember the good old days when you talked about everything. Now you disagree about everything.

In short, you seriously need a babysitter. A date, a night out, an afternoon in the park, can give a couple the space and time to see one another in a fresh, new way. There’s time to ask the follow up question, to go down a different road, and to explore the different “other” you think you know but you don’t. And in that time away from the kids you will gather a bit more energy and that is important too—because energy is the fuel of love. Tiredness makes everything look familiar and unimportant. Energy adds our appreciation to what we are trying to appreciate.

So give your relationship some time, energy and appreciation. A babysitter makes that possible. It is as sound an investment of your money as you can make.

Bob Beverley

Bob Beverley is a psychotherapist, who is the author of *How To Be a Christian and Still Be Sane* and *The Secret Behind The Secret Law of Attraction* (written with [Kevin Hogan](#), Dave Lakhani, and Blair Warren). Visit his website [FindWisdomNow.com](#) to discover more of his E-books and to sign up for his weekly E-zine called “The Dig”.

Baby-Sitter Employment Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone # _____ Cell Phone # _____

School: _____ Occupation: _____

Days and Times Available to Baby-sit: _____

Curfew on Weekends: _____ On Weeknights: _____

Do You Drive? _____ Do You Have Your Own Transportation? _____

If Not, Will You Need to be Picked Up and Dropped Off? _____

Do You Smoke? _____ What is Your Hourly Rate? _____

Are You Allergic to Pets? _____ If So, What Types? _____

Why Are You Applying for a Babysitting Position? _____

Experience

What Type of Experience Do You Have? _____

Highest Number of Children Cared for at One Time: _____

Ages of Children Cared for: _____

CPR and/or First Aid Training: _____

References – (Names & Phone Numbers)

Information for the Sitter

Emergency Information:

Fire: _____ Police: _____ Poison Control: _____

Parent or Guardian Cell Phone Number(s): _____

The Address Here is: _____

Medical Conditions: _____

Where First Aid Supplies are Kept: _____

Where the flashlight is kept: _____

Pets:

Is the pet allowed on the furniture? _____ Allowed outside? _____

Are the children allowed to feed the pet? _____

Are the children allowed to clean the pet's cage? _____

Snacks:

Snacks are allowed at (what times): _____

What is allowed to be eaten for snack? _____

Where should snacks be consumed? _____

Does food need to be cut/prepared a certain way? _____

Instructions:

Microwave: _____

Oven: _____

Television: _____

Thermostat: _____

Bedtime Routine:

Where are children allowed to sleep? _____

Do Children need reminding to brush teeth? _____

Do Children need help brushing teeth? _____

Children sleep with security items: _____

Does child need pull on diaper for bed? _____

Does child take drink to bed? _____

Additional Information: (i.e. which lights left on or turned off at bedtime, doors open or closed, hair accessories to be removed, what to do if the children misbehave, etc.) _____

Babysitting Co-op Booking Record

Month: _____

Secretary: _____

Secretary's Phone Number: _____

Family Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Emergency # _____

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____

Number of Points Carried Over: _____

Date	Family	# of Children	# of Hours	Points +	Points -	Balance

Notes: _____

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