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## SAFETY TIPS FOR BABYSITTING

Babysitting is serious work that can be fun and rewarding for teenagers. It also requires a great deal of responsibility. A good babysitter likes children, is mature enough to properly care for them, can relate to them, can earn their respect, and can prevent and handle emergencies.

### Before going to babysit

- Consider attending a certified babysitting course.
- Know or become familiar with the family you will be babysitting for.
- Know the pay rate, hours, and duties you will be expected to perform.
- Give your family the name, address, and phone number of where you will be babysitting. Also let your family know when you expect to be home.
- Dress with safety in mind. Wear practical, comfortable and washable clothes.

### Arriving for a babysitting job

- Arrive at the babysitting job, or be ready to be picked up, in time to receive and understand all instructions before the parents leave.
- Spend time getting to know the children and family pets before the parents leave. If a child is napping or in bed for the evening, have a parent show you exactly where the child's room is located.
- Tour the house or apartment with the parent(s). You should know the locations of the phones (and how to use them), first aid supplies, fire escape plans, and specific hazards that might attract kids.
- Know how to lock and unlock all doors.

### Information you need from parents

- Be sure to have the name and phone numbers of where they are going (or their cell phone number).
- Find out what time they expect to be home.
- Know where the child's toys are and what they can play with.
- Find out what the child's bath, nap and bedtimes are. Ask whether the child needs help with brushing teeth or getting dressed.
- Learn the rules of the home regarding having friends over, leaving the house, watching television (including videos and off-limit channels), and eating/sleeping on the job.

### Emergency information

- Keep a list of emergency phone numbers including police, fire department, family doctor, a relative, a reliable neighbor, and the veterinarian if they have a pet.
- In case of fire, get everyone out of the house immediately! Once you are outside stay



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outside. Go to a neighbor's house to call 911 and then call the parents to tell them where you and the children are.

- Be prepared for bad weather (tornado, thunderstorm, blizzard, etc.). Have parents point out light switches in the basement, flashlights, emergency kits, battery operated radio, blankets, etc.
- Write down the address of where you are babysitting in case you need to direct help to the house.
- In case of injury, do not try to be a doctor or nurse. For life-threatening situations (no breathing, no responsiveness, no heart beat, or major bleeding), call 911 immediately!
- Consider taking a first aid/CPR course so you can properly treat a minor injury such as small cuts and bruises.

### While babysitting

- Keep your attention on the child. Your job is to protect the child from harm.
- Never have the stereo or television turned up so loud that you cannot hear a child cry.
- Keep telephone conversations brief.
- Never open the door to strangers. You may wish to establish an easily remembered code word.
- Always use extra safety precautions when babysitting, such as using a handrail while helping a child down the stairs.

### Mealtime

- Wash your hands with soap prior to preparing food. After checking the water temperature, make sure children always wash their hands with soap before eating.
- Keep sharp knives and utensils out of a child's reach.
- Keep all cabinets closed.
- Turn pan handles inward so that children cannot easily pull them off the stove or counter.
- In case of a spill, wipe it up quickly so that no one slips and falls.
- Avoid giving young children foods that commonly cause choking such as hard candy, grapes, peanuts and popcorn.
- When preparing a baby's bottle, test the temperature with a small amount of the liquid on your inside wrist before giving it to the baby.
- When feeding the baby with a bottle, keep the child's head slightly elevated and keep the neck of the bottle filled with formula so the baby doesn't swallow air.
- Never prop up a baby bottle. If a child were to begin choking, they would not have the physical neck and arm strength or the "know how" to push the bottle away.
- Never leave any child alone while they are eating.

### Other safety tips

- Keep kids from playing on stairs and keep stairs clear of obstacles such as toys or shoes. If there is a gate across a stairway, make sure it remains closed.



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- Always keep an eye on a child in a walker, swing, stroller, etc.
- Do not let children play around glass windows or doors. Children sometimes run into glass windows or doors because they don't see them.
- To prevent hot water burns and drowning, do not bathe a baby while babysitting. A clean face cloth in lukewarm water works well for cleaning the skin. Leave it to the parent(s) to fully bathe the baby.
- To prevent falls from a changing table, be prepared before changing the baby. Have everything you need (diaper, wipes, clothes, etc.) within your reach and never turn your back on the baby.
- Remember that infants and toddlers love to put things in their mouths and that they can easily choke on small items like coins, food, pins and toy parts.
- Know where medicines, household cleaners, bleaches and electrical appliances are kept and keep them out of the reach of children.
- After children are put to bed, be sure to frequently check bedrooms to make sure the child is not crying, is covered up, and is not in danger of falling out of bed or suffocating.

**Acknowledgments:**

American Red Cross



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