

Babysitting

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“I love babies!”

“Toddlers are so cute!”

“I take care of my younger sister all the time.”

If you think you might want to be an elementary school teacher, if you love working with children, and if you are looking for a flexible part-time job, babysitting may be right for you. Explore what you need to know to be a great babysitter and to learn how the business of babysitting can work for you.

You may think that babysitting is not a big deal. However, as a babysitter you take care of some very special people. You have a lot of responsibility! This is an important job, not just an occasion to play with children. The parent who hires you is your boss, and they have high expectations, including wanting things done a certain way. A good babysitter knows how to keep children safe, how to play with children, and how to deal with the unexpected.

Babysitting Basics

Keeping children safe is a babysitter’s most important responsibility. You have to protect the children you are babysitting from obvious hazards like fire, traffic, and water, but also from less obvious ones like food allergies and choking hazards. You must be especially aware of a child’s toys. Toys with small parts need to be kept away from toddlers who might put them in their mouths. Even the small eyes and noses on stuffed animals and dolls, especially those that are homemade, can be chewed off and swallowed. This is only one aspect of safety with children. To be fully informed and prepared, take a first aid class or become CPR-certified.

Another aspect of babysitting success is understanding that children act differently and need different things at various ages and stages. For example, a toddler who is potty training has to be



PLAN YOUR PROJECT

Use this idea starter AND publication 4-H 365 *Self-Determined Project Guide* as the starting place for your 4-H self-determined project. The *Self-Determined Project Guide* is available from your county OSU Extension office or on the Web at ohio4h.org/selfdetermined. You may choose to do a little or a lot depending on your level of interest. Be sure to register your project with your county OSU Extension office.



encouraged to use the bathroom. A 7-year-old child may want you to join them in an imaginary game. Reading and learning about child development helps you choose toys, games, and playtime activities that fit the child's age and likes. If you arrive ready to play and have ideas for new, age-appropriate games, the children will enjoy their time with you and want you to come back. You will have a good time too!

Even with good planning, unexpected challenges arise. How can you help when children fight? What if someone comes to the door or calls while you are babysitting? What will you do if a child becomes ill or is injured? Thinking beforehand about possible problems can help you deal with them in a calm, clearheaded and responsible way.



Before You Take the Job

Before you agree to babysit, find out the number and ages of the children. Do not hesitate to ask lots of questions, especially if you are uncertain or uncomfortable about something. Are there any limits on snacks for the children? Is it all right to watch TV or use the computer? What is the bedtime routine? Who can be contacted in case of emergency? (It is smart to memorize the exact address of the house too.) Oftentimes, parents may ask you to do special tasks such as washing dishes or straightening up. Talk about transportation too. How will you get to and from the job?

If you are going to get paid for babysitting, determine your rate of pay. You might be uncomfortable at first, but speaking up before you babysit is important.

In fact, the parents you work for will appreciate it. Ask around about babysitting rates in your area. It is all right to be flexible too, with different rates depending on the number of children, time of day, extra work, and so forth.

Your personal safety is also a consideration. Do you and your parents know the families you are serving? Can one of your parents be contacted when you are babysitting, just in case you need some friendly advice? What should you do if the parents of the children you are babysitting are much later than the agreed upon time? If you are walking home, is it safe to walk alone?

The Business of Babysitting

You also may decide to develop your babysitting into regular part-time work. Treating your babysitting jobs as a business may result in more referrals to other families and increase the number of calls you get. You can make it fun. Produce a flyer and business cards, keep notes about your clients, and record your earnings. Before too long, your professional mindset will have you thinking about how to make the service you provide even more valuable. With this project, you can have fun earning money while learning useful lessons for the future.

AREAS OF INTEREST AND THINGS TO DO

Every self-determined 4-H project can be broken down into areas of interest. These are the specific things members want to address during their project adventures. Using *4-H 365 Self-Determined Project Guide*, identify at least three areas of interest with at least three activities per area to explore. Take your ideas from the list below or make up your own.

Safety

- Take a Safe Sitter, Red Cross or other babysitting course.
- Take a CPR or first aid course.
- Create a list of emergency phone numbers, including the fire department, police and poison control. If possible, find out the name and phone number of a neighbor.

- ❑ Make a list of general questions to ask before every babysitting job, such as household rules, special diet restrictions, the child's likes and dislikes, and so forth.
- ❑ Develop your own babysitting safety checklist.

Activities

- ❑ Create activities you can do with children of different ages.
- ❑ Buy small or travel games at yard sales to take with you on babysitting jobs.
- ❑ Learn card games that children enjoy.
- ❑ Find simple crafts that kids of different ages can do and gather all necessary materials.
- ❑ Look for simple recipes that kids would enjoy making, such as play dough or chocolate chip cookies.
- ❑ Put together a collection of your favorite childhood books to bring along.



Make It a Business

- ❑ Make a flyer to advertise your babysitting business.
- ❑ Talk to other babysitters and parents in your area to determine how much to charge for babysitting.
- ❑ Make business cards to give to interested parents or to parents to keep handy.
- ❑ Create a flyer and distribute it among your acquaintances.

- ❑ Create an online calendar (such as Google calendar) and invite parents of children you often babysit to see when you are available.

Learn More about Children

- ❑ Read and learn more about children at different ages and stages. Share what you learn with your project helper.
- ❑ Learn when children begin to crawl, pull up on tables, start to walk, and so forth.
- ❑ Learn about language development at different ages.
- ❑ Learn more about what children should and can eat at different ages. Share what you learn with your club or group.
- ❑ Develop a plan for discipline, such as timeout or asking a child to go to bed early.



RELATED RESOURCES

Babysitting: The Basics, kidshealth.org/en/teens/babysit.html

Safe Sitter, [Safesitter.org](https://safesitter.org)

University of Illinois Extension: Illinois 4-H Babysitting Project Resource Guide, go.illinois.edu/4HBabysittingResources

The American Red Cross, redcross.org

For Project Helpers:

I Have What It Takes To Be Your Babysitter!, 4-hmilitarypartnerships.org/resources/educator-resources/youth-babysitting



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