



## Babysitting 101 for parents

**IT'S EASY TO FIND ARTICLES, BROCHURES AND BOOKS** geared toward first-time babysitters. But the best babysitting experiences don't start with the sitter; they start with the parent.

It's a parent's job to make sure that the sitter is competent, comfortable and prepared, and that the child knows what to expect when mom or dad leaves. That means taking a little time up front before the sitter ever arrives to set expectations and establish some safety measures. The American Academy of Pediatrics offers some of these suggestions:

### **Parents should:**

- Meet the sitter and check references and training in advance.
- Be certain the sitter has had first aid training and knows CPR.
- Be sure the babysitter is at least 13 years old and mature enough to handle common emergencies.
- Have the sitter spend time with you before babysitting to meet the children and learn their routines.
- Show the sitter around the house. Point out fire escape routes and potential problem areas. Instruct the sitter to leave the house right away in case of fire and to call the fire department from a neighbor's house.
- Discuss feeding, diapering, bathing, and sleeping arrangements for your children.
- Tell your sitter of any allergies or specific needs your children have.
- Have emergency supplies available including a flashlight, first aid chart, and first aid supplies.
- Plan some special activities for the sitter to do with your child.
- Be sure any guns are stored unloaded in locked cabinet.
- Make sure your departure isn't rushed and that you say good-bye to your child before leaving.



### **Sitters should:**

- Be prepared for an emergency.
- Always phone for help if there are any problems or questions.
- Never open the door to strangers.
- Never leave the children alone in the house—even for a minute.
- Never give the children any medicine or food unless instructed to do so by the parents.
- Remember that their only job is to care for the children.
- Remember that tender loving care usually quiets an unhappy child.

### **Put it in writing**

In times of stress, even the simplest information can be hard to remember. Plus, putting key information in writing keeps communication clear. So be sure to leave:

- Parent's full name, home address and home phone number
- Contact information for parent (phone number and where they will be)
- Child's doctor's name and phone number
- Poison control phone number
- Other emergency contact information (a neighbor or a nearby relative)
- Any special needs (medications, allergies, etc.)
- Important times (meal time, bed time, when you expect to return) ❖