



4-H 365.17



# 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. This 4-H idea starter helps you explore what you need to know to be a great babysitter and 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 kids. The parent who hires you is your boss, and he or she has 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

## Plan Your Project

Use this idea starter AND publication 4-H 365 *Self-Determined Project Guide* as you plan your project. All Ohio 4-H projects, including idea starters, include project activities, learning experiences, and leadership/citizenship activities. It is all spelled out in the *Self-Determined Project Guide*, available from your county Extension office or on the web at [www.ohio4h.org/selfdetermined](http://www.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. Good luck!

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 encouraged to use the bathroom. A seven-year-old child may want you to join her 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. Don't 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 and go from there. It is all right to be flexible too, with different rates depending

on the number of children, time of day, extra work, etc.

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 and learn useful lessons for the future.

## **Related Resources**

Babysitting Basics from KidsHealth  
[http://kidshealth.org/teen/school\\_jobs/jobs/babysit.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/school_jobs/jobs/babysit.html)  
Includes short articles on three rules: (1) Be prepared, (2) Know what to expect, and (3) Stay focused on the kids.

Safe Sitter, Inc.  
<http://Safesitter.org/babysitters.htm>  
Offers babysitting courses and online ideas about babysitting safety, tips, and activities.

University of Illinois Extension, A Guide to the Business of Babysitting  
<http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/Babysitting>  
Covers babysitting as a business and general child care information.

The American Red Cross  
<http://www.redcross.org>  
Includes access to babysitting courses in your area.

Ohio State University Extension, Family and Consumer Sciences, Growth and Development  
<http://fcs.osu.edu/hdfs/stages-of-life/young-children/yc-growthanddev.php>  
Offers hundreds of articles about growth and development of children.

Do I Have What It Takes To Be YOUR Babysitter? from 4-H Military Partnerships  
<http://www.4-hmilitarypartnerships.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=82>  
Helps middle school and teenaged youth learn to be responsible, caring, trustworthy, competent, capable, and safe babysitters.

## Areas of Interest and Things to Do

Every self-determined project can be broken down into areas of interest. These are specific things members want to address during their project adventure. Using your 4-H 365 Self Determined Project Guide, identify at least three (3) areas of interest with at least three (3) activities per area to explore. Take your ideas from the list below or make up your own.



### Safety

- 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.
- Go through a CPR or first aid course.
- Take a Safe Sitter, Red Cross, or other babysitting course.
- Develop your own babysitting safety checklist.
- Make a list of general questions to answer before every babysitting job, such as household rules, special diet restrictions, the child's likes and dislikes, etc.

### 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.
- Learn when children begin to crawl, pull up on tables, and start to walk, etc.
- Learn about language development at different ages.
- Learn more about what children should and can eat at different ages.
- Develop a plan for discipline, such as time out or asking a child to go to bed early.

[www.ohio4h.org/selfdetermined](http://www.ohio4h.org/selfdetermined)



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