



Whether your potential sitter is your own child or a friend, strongly encourage the teen to enroll in a baby sitter training course.

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## Baby sitters

### Selecting a baby sitter

Selecting the right sitter to care for your children is one of the most important decisions a parent can make. When considering a teenage baby sitter, parents should look for a teen who demonstrates leadership and responsibility, understands the different stages of child development, recognizes safety issues in the home and knows first aid and infant and child CPR.

Baby sitting is a lot more complicated than simply playing with the children and keeping them entertained. The sitter must act proactively to identify possible dangers and keep children safe from harm. The sitter also must be prepared to think clearly and act decisively if something goes wrong.

### What parents can do

- Get to know the potential sitter and watch his or her interactions with your children. Is the potential sitter able to engage your children in safe and age-appropriate activities? Does the teen become frustrated easily, or is he or she able to transition easily with your children from one activity to the next?
- When considering a teen from outside your home, meet the potential sitter's parents. Be sure you have the sitter's name, address and telephone number. When you think you've found the right person, ask for and check references carefully.
- Whether your potential sitter is your own child or a friend, strongly encourage the teen to enroll in a baby sitter training course.
- Plan to spend at least 15 minutes with the sitter before leaving him/her with your children to discuss the day's activities or concerns. On the first visit, sitters should receive a tour of the house, and parents should point out the location of telephones, exits, fire extinguishers, first aid supplies and other important items.

Other information that should be shared includes:

- Family rules, including disciplinary guidelines.
  - Daily routines such as eating, television, outdoor play boundaries and sleeping arrangements.
  - Food preferences and allergies.
  - Emergency contact information: parents, relatives, neighbors and emergency services.
  - Who the children may play with or visit, and whether outings such as a walk to a nearby park are permissible.
- When parents return home, sitters and parents need to discuss the day and any concerns either may have, such as the children's behavior or activities and anything out of the ordinary that happened, such as a fall.
  - After the sitter has left, parents also need to check how things went from the children's perspective. Ask if anything made them feel afraid or uncomfortable and if the children would like the sitter to care for them again.