

# Selecting a Reliable Child Care Provider

With summer rolling closer, as well as many parents returning to the office, your family may be looking for a reliable babysitter or child care provider. Yet, finding someone who you trust to take care of your children while you are not there can be nerve-wracking. What should you be looking for? And once you have hired someone, how can you make sure they are both prepared and trustworthy?

## Before hiring

You should screen anyone who supervises your child. The following are some things to consider when choosing a babysitter.

### References and background

- This step is crucial when vetting prospective babysitters. Ask for the names and phone numbers of other families for whom they have previously worked. And then make sure to actually call the parents. Find out what they think of the babysitter and how their kids felt as well. Inquire if there were ever any problems and if there were negative circumstances that influenced the departure of the babysitter.

### Training

- Ask the prospects about their level of training. Have they completed courses for infant/child CPR and can they provide proof? Have they ever taken babysitting courses?

### Parenting philosophy

- This is the area that can help you get to know how they discipline, reward, and interact with kids and see if it matches your own philosophy. How do they handle fights between siblings? What do they do when a child is crying?



### Family Specific questions

- Be sure to ask questions that are geared specifically towards your own family's needs. For example, if the babysitter will need to drive the kids to activities, do they have a clean driving record? Do they have experience with kids your children's age, and how much?

### Drugs and alcohol

- Never leave a child in the care of someone who is using drugs or alcohol. Drugs and alcohol undermine a person's judgment. Consider asking the prospect to take a drug test.

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After vetting the prospective babysitter, have them come over for 30 minutes to an hour to see how they interact with your kids. After, ask your kids if they liked them and felt comfortable with them.

## Prepping the babysitter

You've found the babysitter that best fits your children and family's needs. Now What?

### Safety rules

- Discuss with the babysitter about your family safety rules. This should include touching safety rules. Explain that you have taught your child to tell you when any of the rules are broken, even if the child has been told to keep it a secret. (Note: make sure that you have indeed taught your children about safety rules, and have had a recent discussion with them before the babysitter begins working).

### Contact information

- Be sure to leave important contact information where the babysitter can access it easily. This information should include phone numbers (your and your partner's cell and work, family members, friends, neighbors, doctor's and any emergency numbers) and home address. Also a good idea to include kid's names, ages, and birthdates in case of an emergency.

### Medical Prep

- It's best for the babysitter to be prepared for any situation. Show them where you keep a signed consent for certain emergency medical care. Review the first aid kit and where you keep it. Discuss any allergies your kids have or medicines (quantities and time) your children need to take while you're gone.

### House Safety

- Give the babysitter a full house tour. Be sure to point out all exits, where the fire extinguisher is located, and where the spare door key can be found (just in case!)

### House rules and routines

- Discuss any house rules you have. Perhaps there is a no junk food rule after dinner, or your children aren't allowed to use certain words, whatever they are, keep your babysitter in the loop. Additionally, explain each of your children's typical routines that are necessary for the babysitter to know; what time they wake up or go to sleep, what time activities take place, what time they can have a snack. Kids like routine, and having a babysitter shouldn't mean everything is uprooted.

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## Going forward

Once your babysitter is prepped and begins working, there are a few things you should consistently do to stay involved with the person who is looking after your children.

### Debrief

- When you get home, whether you were gone all day at work, or just gone for a couple hours for date night, be sure to check in with the babysitter before they leave. Discuss how the day went and how the kids behaved.

### Communicate with your kids

- It's important to consistently discuss how your children are feeling about the babysitter. Ask them if they like the babysitter or if they do anything that is weird. If your child says yes, make sure to ask for more information. Do not leave your child with someone that they don't like or are not comfortable around.

### Call your children

- Another way to check in with your kids is to call your child while you are out. Check in on how they're feeling and what is happening.

### Drop by unexpectedly

- Sometimes, it's helpful to see how things are going in person, rather than relying on secondhand accounts. You can do this by occasionally returning home early or unexpectedly popping in to grab something or drop off lunch.

## At all times

### Trust your instincts!

If at any point, whether it is during the interviewing process or a couple months into the hiring, you feel funny about leaving your kids with this person (beyond the typical separation feeling) trust your gut! It's best not to take chances with your children's safety.

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Originally posted on the Now What? Blog on 4.28.21 The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention
2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse
3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.

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