

## Know Your Sitter

Parents occasionally need time away from their children. Finding a dependable babysitter is imperative. Children are fragile and can be hurt in an instant if left in the hands of an inexperienced person. How well do you know your sitter? You may be used to your child's behaviors but others may not. Their reaction could put your child in danger if they are not prepared to handle some situations. For instance, a baby crying can be frustrating to those that have no experience with infants. This frustration may be taken out on the child.



Churches, schools, pediatricians and neighborhood groups may have a list of babysitters available for parents. A friend or neighbor may also suggest someone. However you find out about a babysitter, make sure you interview them before leaving children in their care.

### Factors to consider when deciding on a babysitter:

**Age:** There is no set age requirement by law in Ohio for babysitters. However, most safe sitter courses, such as the Red Cross require youths to be at least 11 years of age to enroll. Maturity should be the main consideration however, since that may vary significantly between youths of the same age.

**Experience:** Check to see if the sitter earned their certification in a course, such as the one offered by the Red Cross. The sitter should be trained in first aid and safety basics, such as rescue techniques for choking and CPR. Ask hypothetical questions throughout the interview.

**Responsibilities:** The ages and number of children to be watched should be considered. An older child may require less supervision than an infant or toddler. The length of time you will be away is also important. A younger sitter may not be able to handle multiple tasks like bathing and feeding, but could be fine for a short amount of time in the evening while the children are asleep.

**Personality:** Have a trial time where you watch to see how the children and sitter interact.

**References:** Ask for references from other families that have hired the sitter, or another adult who knows their character.

### Preparation:

1. Post emergency numbers including a phone number where you can be reached, and update the sitter if necessary.
2. Provide instructions regarding any heating and air-conditioning systems and alarms.
3. Provide feeding and bedtime schedules.
4. If medication is a necessity, provide the dosage and time it should be administered.
5. Review household rules including those for the sitter such as phone use and visitors.
6. Write down the health care provider for your children, as well as health insurance information and a medical release authorizing medical treatment.