



Babysitter

“Children are apt to live up to what you believe of them.”

—Lady Bird Johnson,
former First Lady



The magic age for babysitting is 12! That’s when most girls say they began sitting—and it’s the youngest age at which most parents say they will allow someone to babysit for their children. Whether you’re getting ready to babysit in the future or have already started, this badge will help you become the best babysitter you can be.

Steps

1. Get to know how kids develop
2. Prepare for challenges
3. Focus on play
4. Find potential employers
5. Practice your babysitting skills

Purpose

When I’ve earned this badge, I’ll be prepared to babysit and will have tried out my skills on the job.

More to Explore

Pretend you're a Girl Scout in 1980. As girls did to earn their Tending Toddlers badge, invite a group of parents to discuss their thoughts about being parents. Ask them about such things as the first time they held their babies, what makes an infant feel secure, the importance of talking and playing with a child, how a child changed their lives, and any other child-care topics you'd like to know more about.



All children, no matter their age, have three needs in common. They need understanding, good physical care, and protection.

—Cadette Girl Scout Handbook, 1963

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more!

STEP

1 Get to know how kids develop

Kids of different ages have different needs, desires, and behaviors. In this step, do one choice to find out more about three of these age groups: newborns, infants, toddlers, preschoolers, young kids (ages 5–7), and older kids (ages 8–10).

Take notes on what you learn about these questions (you might turn them into a chart for easy reference!):

- **What's important to know about these three age groups?**
- **What do kids this age look like?**
- **What do they act like?**
- **How do they interact with others?**

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Observe kids in person for at least one hour. It could be at a day-care center, preschool, after-school program, or with an older girl who has a regular babysitting job. Act as a scientific researcher, and take notes about your observations. When you get home, do some research in books or online, and compare your observations with professional opinions on childhood development.

OR

Ask an expert. A school counselor, developmental psychologist, day-care professional, or health-care provider can provide you with valuable knowledge from their years of experience. Before your interview, do some basic research on how kids in the three groups you're interested in act, so you can ask informed questions.

OR

Find information at the library or online. Watch videos that show kids in action. Then write a one-paragraph summary of your findings for each age level to help you remember what you've found out. (It's easier to cement information in your mind when you talk to professionals or see things firsthand.) You'll impress potential employers when you're able to share all you know!



STEP

2 Prepare for challenges

The number-one rule of sitting is to keep kids safe! Babies and toddlers need diapering and toilet help. Temper tantrums, meltdowns, sibling rivalry, scrapes and tumbles, behavioral issues—it's all part of the day-to-day experience of dealing with kids. Learn crucial skills in one of the following ways.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Attend a babysitter training course. Many hospitals, colleges, and community centers offer these courses. Your Girl Scout council might as well. (If you attend a course that includes first aid training, that course completes both this step and step 1 of the Cadette First Aid badge.)

OR

Interview five moms about what they expect from a babysitter. What are the top-three behavioral, safety, and emergency situations they expect babysitters to be able to handle? If these are situations you aren't prepared for, find a way to prepare, and do so.

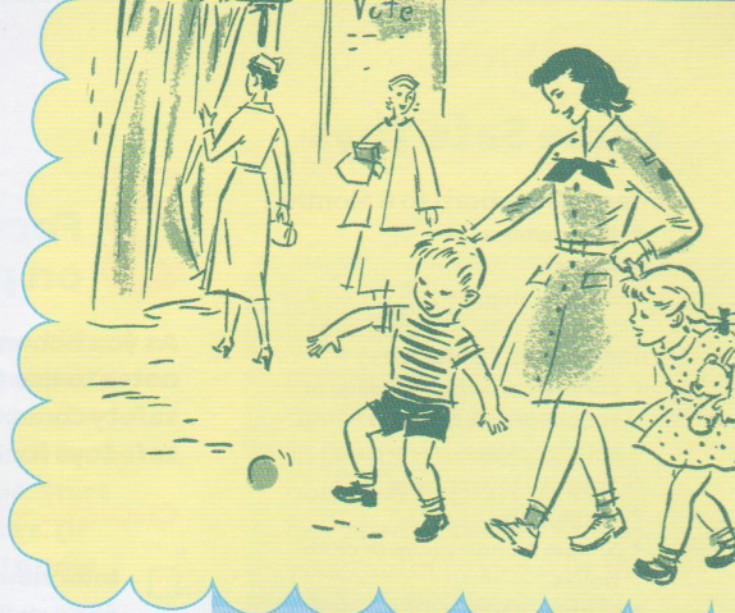
OR

Interview five experienced babysitters, nannies, or child-care specialists. Ask about behavioral challenges and emergency situations they've encountered on the job. What did they do? What would they suggest you do? How would you handle those situations? If you're missing important knowledge, find a way to get it, and go for it.

TIP: Girl Scouts of the USA recommends that you learn first aid for children before babysitting alone. Try your Cadette First Aid badge to get these important skills, or choose a babysitter training course that includes first aid for children.

More to Explore

Different children have different needs. Learn from a child-care provider, teacher, or parent about the special needs of caring for a child with a disability.



Taking care of a baby is great fun, if you know how. If you are not nervous or hurried and the baby is kept comfortable and well, both you and the baby will have a good time.

—Girl Scout Handbook, 1940



Some Safe Toys

Infants (Newborn to 6 Months)

- Soft mobiles
- Rattles
- Stuffed animals

Infants (6 to 12 Months)

- Large colored blocks made of rubber or soft material
- Large stacking boxes or cups
- Squeaky toys or bells
- Large balls
- Simple picture books or cloth books
- Push-pull toys
- Teething toys

Toddlers (1- and 2-Year-Olds)

- Building blocks
- Large plastic toy people and animals
- Action toys like telephones, trains, planes, cars, and trucks
- Simple puzzles with knobs
- Puppets
- Drums, xylophones, or other musical toys

Preschoolers

(3- and 4-Year-Olds)

- Simple board games
- Storybooks
- Balls
- Musical instruments
- Dolls, action figures, and props for pretend play—cooking, cleaning, and carpentry
- Wagons and tricycles
- Puzzles with large pieces

Younger School-Age Children

(5-, 6- and 7-Year-Olds)

- Board games and puzzles
- Items related to hobbies or collections like stickers, rocks, or miniature cars
- Electronic games
- Fashion and action dolls
- Bikes and scooters

Older School-Age Children

(8-, 9- and 10-Year-Olds)

- Sports equipment
- Bikes
- Remote control cars
- Construction sets

STEP

3

Focus on play

As you become familiar with playtime in one of these choices, take notes to use throughout your career as a babysitter! Be aware of safety concerns at playtime, too—review the sidebar for a list of safe toys for each age group.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Interview an educational toy or game creator.** With an adult's help, find a staff member at a game or toy company that develops toys for kids. Prepare questions and ask for advice about how to best use the toys with kids of different ages.

OR

- Observe kids at a toy store for two hours.** First, speak with the store manager to make sure it's okay to spend time there. (You could spend two hours in one store, or do two one-hour sessions at different stores.) While you're there, take notes on what kinds of games and toys are most attractive to kids of various ages.

OR

- Volunteer for at least two hours.** It could be at a day-care center or preschool, an after-school program, or as an assistant to an older girl with a sitting job. As you watch kids play and interact, take note of the fun of active games and of quieter things like drawing and crafting. (If you chose this activity in step 1, do a separate visit for this step.)

TIP: If you are passionate about an activity, the children you babysit are likely to be, too. Kids love older kids, and they love learning about things older kids love to do. As you're observing and interacting, think about what you love to do, and what you loved to do as a little girl, and how you might share it at your babysitting job in step 5.



More to Explore

Journey together! If you babysit for a Girl Scout, choose the activities you most enjoyed in Leadership Journeys for younger girls—or take this chance to get familiar with them—and help her on her Journey.

STEP

4 Find potential employers

Now that you've observed and know what to expect from kids of different ages, think about how many kids and what ages you'd be comfortable babysitting. Review the "Market Prep" box for some tips before you begin this step. Then begin to search for a family whose needs match your desires and capabilities. Start with people you know well: family, friends, and neighbors. (If you already have a babysitting job, use this step to find a new employer for your job in step 5.)

CHOICES - DO ONE:

- Market yourself.** Have your introduction speech and your questions ready, and call around, keeping notes on who is interested and what they need, including if and when you should call back.

OR

- Create a questionnaire to give to family, friends, and neighbors.** On one side of a flyer, write your name, qualifications, and the type of babysitting job you're seeking. On the flip side, write a questionnaire for your potential employers to fill out—it might include number of children and their ages; when the family generally needs babysitting help; what, if any, household responsibilities they expect you to complete; their basic house rules; and if they have any pets.

OR

- Conduct interviews with potential employers.** Think about places where you might find possible customers. What about before a PTA meeting or after a worship service?

SAFETY TIP

When looking for jobs, **DO NOT** post your name, address, or phone number on the Internet. **DO NOT** place business cards or flyers in coffee shops, supermarkets, or other public places. It is unsafe to allow total strangers to get your personal information.

Market Prep

Before you start this step, figure out the answers to the questions your potential employers are likely to ask, such as what is your rate of pay—is it by the job or by the hour? Is it the same for one child or more? (To decide, you might ask some current babysitters in your area about the "going rate," or what they get paid.) What times are you available, and will you have transportation to and from the place where you'll be babysitting?



STEP

5 Practice your babysitting skills

For your first job, you could co-sit with a friend, be an apprentice to an older girl, or act as a parent's helper. Set up a job with the family you feel most comfortable sitting for. Know the information listed on the parent's form, or fill it out with the parents (see page 6). Then do one of the following to add a healthy dose of fun—for both you and the kids! Use what you've learned in previous steps as you pick the right kind of fun for you and your charges.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Come prepared for a game.** You could plan a scavenger hunt, teach your favorite board game (or learn to play the kids' favorite before you arrive), or bring a great bedtime story to read using fun voices for each character.

FOR MORE FUN: Customize an existing toy or game.

OR

- Make a tasty snack.** Are the kids allowed snacks? Ask what foods, if any, will be available, and if it's okay to make a kid-friendly recipe. What about raisin faces on jelly toast, no-bake granola bars, or fruit smoothies? If the kids are old enough, let them help you make the recipe—it's a great chance to teach them about healthy living.

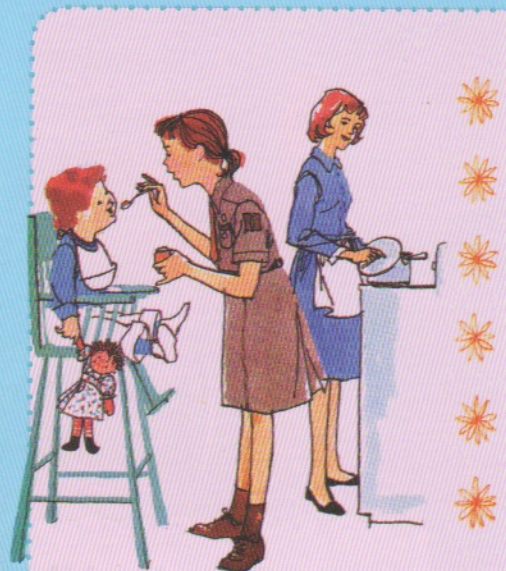


FOR MORE FUN: Find out the child's favorite foods, and create a great snack using them!

OR

- Plan a fun craft.** Find a simple recipe for play dough, bring paper bags to make puppets with, or ask about family art supplies and teach a little lesson about an art or craft you enjoy (or want to learn with the kids).

TIP: If you're sitting for more than one child, or if you'll be dealing with bedtimes, naptimes, homework, or meals, you may want to make a schedule so you know what to do when. Of course, ask parents if the kids have a regular schedule and/or preferences—maybe their daughter needs her teddy bear and a cup of water when she goes to bed, or their son needs extra help brushing his teeth.



PARENT'S HELPERS

A parent's helper is someone who helps with kids while the parent or parents are at home—but busy with something else—or who goes along with a family on a trip. It's great on-the-job training. Then, when you're feeling confident, the parents feel comfortable, and you've gotten to know the kids, you're likely to be the first person they'll call on for regular babysitting.



Parent's Form



Emergency numbers

- ◆ Fire
- ◆ Police
- ◆ Ambulance
- ◆ Doctor
- ◆ Neighbor
- ◆ Family
- ◆ Address and phone number of house you are sitting at

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Phone numbers and addresses of all places the parents of the children you are babysitting will be:

- ◆
- ◆
- ◆

House information

- ▶ If and how should you answer phone or door
- ▶ How do locks and alarms work?
- ▶ Where are flashlights, candles and matches, first aid, cleaning items, fire escapes?
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- ▶ Special instructions for any appliances you will need to use: heat, air-conditioning, baby swings, television, stove, microwave, high chair, etc.
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- ▶ Pet needs
- ▶ General house rules (watching TV, food from kitchen, etc.)

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Kid info

- ▶ Meals/snacks expected/allowed
- ▶ Allergies/restrictions
- ▶ If a child needs medication, when do they need it, and how much?

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