

How to Find the Perfect Babysitter

This report is provided by My Mommy Manual, the site that connects moms with practical and inspired tips. For more [parenting articles](#), [coaching](#), and helpful [product reviews](#), visit www.mymommymanual.com.

In almost any setting, there are usually plenty of eager babysitters but trustworthy, capable and dependable ones are worth their weight in gold. So where do you start? Well, look around. Do you have any neighbors that are of babysitter age? Are there any churches or synagogues in your area? Sometimes, they will keep a list of youth group members who are interested in babysitting. If not, you can always ask to post an announcement on their bulletin board. What about your child's preschool? Again, the preschool office may have a babysitting list. You can also go online to sites like **www.SitterCity.com** and post an ad.

If you are game for grooming up and coming sitters, consider hiring your neighborhood pre-teens as "mother's helpers." Helpers watch your kids while you are at home and can eventually become regular sitters for you.

I've found the best source for babysitters to be other mommies. But tread very carefully in this delicate area. Many moms can be reluctant to share their sitters for fear that they will never get them back. I "shared" a babysitter once and my "friend" booked her for the next year of Saturdays. That's terrible form and just bad mommy karma! Lesson learned... I don't share with her anymore and the

whole thing cooled off our friendship. If you are going to tap your mommy network, be mindful of the rules: 1) be clear and honest about your needs and 2) always defer to your source.

For example, if you are looking for someone so that you and your husband can have a set “date night” once a month, declare that. If someone still offers their sitter, it’s because it works with their schedule too. If you fall in love with her sitter and want her for more than previously stated, make sure it doesn’t conflict with your friend’s needs. Babysitters hate getting “put in the middle” so it is your responsibility to clear any conflicts with your friend. Wouldn’t you want the same if the situations were reversed?

One way to approach the subject carefully is to say to another mom, “I would love to find a sitter for an occasional night out. Do you think your sitter has a friend or knows someone who might be looking for a few more hours?” If your friend still offers you the name of *her* sitter, reassure her that you won’t infringe on her time!

How to Pick a Good Sitter

If you’ve found a sitter through your mommy network, the referral is already built in. In all other cases, make sure to contact the sitter’s references. It really helps to start this search well in advance of the time when you actually need a sitter. That way, you can get a sense for her reliability before you have to leave your most precious children in her care. Set up an interview. The process of interviewing her (or him) will give you a good sense of this person.

Did she return your phone call promptly? Was her outgoing message relatively normal? :) Did she show up for the interview on time? Was she dressed appropriately? How did your kids and pets respond to her? (I am a big believer in kids’ and pets’ intuitions!) Your mommy

radar will also be up and humming! Will this person be a good fit for your family? Trust your mommy instincts!

How to Work with a Sitter

Now that you've found her, you want to make sure she sticks around! So here are a few tips to make sure she falls in love with your kids and you too!

- *Feed her.* Remember when you were in college and you survived on ramen noodles. One of the perks of the off campus babysitting job was to be able to eat normal food! So stock your fridge and pantry with goodies. It doesn't hurt to find out what her favorites are and occasionally supply those.
- *Give her a ride.* Some sitters don't drive or have their own car. If she does drive, consider providing gas money if she has to go a long way.
- *Be a good listener.* Take the time to find out how the night went and address any concerns she has about your kids or whatever else may be going on in her life.
- *Be professional.* That means, always be clear about what you expect. If you have a tendency to be a space cadet, write down a list of things you want done while you are gone. Pay her the agreed upon amount, preferably in cash and... NO IOU's! Be on time or if you know you are running late, call and see if that's okay.
- *Be generous.* Always round up. Remember birthdays with gifts or cash and holiday bonuses (usually in the amount of a typical night's tab).