

Safety Tips for Babysitters

PLANNING and PREVENTION are the keys to fire safety. Protect yourself and the children you're watching against fire by taking simple precautions.

Plan your escape

EVERY HOUSEHOLD should have an escape plan. When you baby-sit, discuss what to do in case of fire with the adults in the household.

- Be familiar with their home. Learn all the exits and know how to unlock doors and windows.
- Know two ways out of each room, especially bedrooms.
- All households should have a meeting place outside where everyone gathers after escaping a fire. Have the adults show you the meeting place and don't confuse the children with a different plan.
- Discuss the escape plan and meeting place with the children. Make sure every child knows where to meet outside.

With an adult, complete an emergency information sheet.

This sheet should have the following information.

1. Phone numbers for Police, Fire, and Ambulance. (if not 9-1-1)
2. Phone number to the Poison Control Center
3. Doctor's name and phone number.
4. Phone number where the parents can be reached.
5. Children's family name.
6. Full address where you are baby-sitting.
7. Phone number where you are baby-sitting.
8. Neighbours name and phone number.
9. Any other instructions.

Carry this sheet with you in your pocket. Be sure to know the location of a neighbour who will be home. In case of fire, call the fire department from a neighbour's phone.

Other important safety tips

- Never smoke while babysitting.
- If you find matches, lighters, or other smoking materials, put them up high (preferably in a locked cabinet) where the children can't see or reach them.
- Keep anything that can burn - such as books, paper and clothing - at least three feet (one meter) away from space heaters. And keep children away from portable heaters and space heaters, too.

- Cook only if you have permission from the adults in the household. Never leave cooking unattended. Set a timer to remind you to turn everything off.
- Don't let pot handles stick out over the edge of the stove where they can be bumped or grabbed. Turn them in, pointing toward the back of the stove, to prevent spilling hot liquids.
- Never put anything in the microwave unless you are absolutely sure that it is safe. Paper, glass, and microwave-proof earthenware are safe. In many cases, metals are not. Read and follow the instructions on all packaged microwave meals.
- Keep children away from the microwave. Be careful when removing covers from microwave containers; escaping steam can cause severe burns. Cool all food sufficiently before serving to children.
- You should keep children in your sight until you are sure that they are sound asleep. Even then, make sure that you can hear them if they wake up.

In case of fire

Get Out! Stay Out!

If you smell smoke, hear a smoke alarm, or see flames, get everybody out! Don't wait for any reason. Go directly to your meeting place and count heads to make sure that everyone has escaped.

Crawl Low under Smoke

If you encounter smoke while you are escaping a fire, use another exit route. If you must escape through smoke, remember that heat and smoke rise, so cleaner air is always near the floor. Crawl on your hands and knees, keeping your head 12 to 24 inches (30-60 centimeters) above the floor. Go first, making sure the children follow you.

Call the Fire Department

Take the children to a neighbour's home and call the fire department from there. Give the fire department the complete address of the fire and stay on the phone until you're told to hang up. Then call the children's parents.

Don't Go Back

Watch the children carefully while you're waiting for the fire department. Make sure no one goes back in for any reason. Keep everyone at a safe distance from the fire and out of the way of the fire fighters.

If You Can't Get To the Children

If smoke or flames are blocking the route to the children's bedrooms, use the phone in the home if possible or go straight to the neighbor's and call the fire department from there. Tell them that the children are trapped inside and where they are.

When you baby-sit, YOU are in charge. During an emergency, you must act on your own and right away.