

Solving the sitter search:

3 top tips for finding a trustworthy babysitter

By SHARON MACGREGOR

Sooner or later most parents with small children eventually find themselves in what we call "the babysitting bind"—an unexpected occasion or "night out"—and neither spouse has lined up a babysitter. Sometimes grandparents are simply not available to babysit their precious grandchildren. For parents who've never hired a babysitter before, the process may be somewhat nerve-racking. After all, you can't just leave your toddler with anybody, but who can you trust? These tips help take the guesswork out of finding a babysitter.

Go through your network

Reach out to everyone in your network of friends, family, and co-workers. Talk to owners of local businesses that you patronize as well as leaders at local houses of worship. In most cases, people will be eager to recommend someone they know who babysits. Tom Kellner and his wife, Colleen of Walkill have two children, 4-year-old Elizabeth and 8-month-old Tommy. When the Kellners go out for the evening, they generally take their baby boy with them and find a sitter for their little girl.

If Colleen's parents aren't available, Colleen has a choice of two teenage sitters for her daughter. Colleen met one of them in church, where she used to teach Sunday school. The other sitter is one of Colleen's former students from the Walkill school district, where she taught. Since Colleen already knew both of her prospective employees, she didn't have to check any references.



Craigslist success story

Sandra DiGiovanni of Newburgh (pictured second from left) recommends *Craigslist.com* for solving the sitter search. The mother of three hired babysitter Nicole Cubero (on left) through Craigslist. "I did not have a lot of area connections and really didn't know anyone," says Sandra about her move to Newburgh. She explains that Craigslist provided her with an easy way to browse through the mix of teens, college students, and stay-at-home moms offering their services.

DiGiovanni says Cubero has been working for her for two years and she considers her to be a very reliable babysitter. DiGiovanni is pictured above with Cubero and two of her children, three-year-old Aaron and eight-year-old Autumn.

Use the internet

The internet is coming to the rescue of many parents in search of child care. If you do a Google search for "babysitters," it'll turn up a host of websites, such as *care.com*, *babysitters.com*, *care4hire.com*, *rentasitter.com*, *elitesitter.com*, *nurturefind.com*, and *phoneasitter.com*. *Sittercity.com* is a service done in partnership with the American Red Cross and requires a minimum \$9.99

membership fee. The Child Care Council of Orange County also offers its services online at *childcarecounciloc.org*. The site is designed to help county residents find full-time child care, but can also be used to locate a frequent "night out" sitter. The other counties do not generally offer help with babysitters.

Other options include using Facebook or other social networking sites to post requests

Tom Kellner of Walkill suggests paying sitters a night differential.



for friends to privately message their child care recommendations.

Check references

Remember, always check references and interview your

What's the going rate for babysitting?

When it comes to the issue of what to pay a babysitter, there's apparently quite a range. Perhaps the best way to decide on a fair rate is to consult with other parents in your area. Find out what they're paying for babysitting. On the average, teenage babysitters in the Hudson Valley earn about \$8 per hour. Most sitters will expect to be paid extra for watching more than one child. Tom Kellner suggests paying a higher rate after a certain hour, in much the same way some jobs pay a nighttime differential. Like the Kellners, it's also a good idea to have a number of babysitters at the ready, in case one or two of them have a scheduling conflict.

prospective employee. After the interview, include time to watch your child interact with the would-be babysitter. Seeing them interact firsthand, may offer some insight into how they will behave when you're not there. First meetings can be held in a public place such as a park. That way, you can protect

your privacy, in case things don't work out. It's your right and responsibility to say "no," if you have the slightest misgiving about your prospective hire. Your child's safety comes first.

Writer Sharon MacGregor lives in the Bloomingburg area with her husband and 2 sons.

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