

# HOW TO LAUNCH A: --- BABYSITTING BUSINESS



## INTRODUCTION TO BABYSITTING

It cannot be overstated that babysitting carries with it the biggest responsibility you can take on as a young entrepreneur; the life (or lives) of someone else's children. It's a huge compliment that they're comfortable enough to place you in charge of the most important thing in their life for the few hours they're away and it's a responsibility not to be taken lightly. There are great upsides to babysitting and considerable challenges as well. All and all, if you're comfortable with the demands of babysitting, you naturally have the personality for the work and you're willing to take the necessary preparations to get certified and registered, babysitting can be less of a job and more of an opportunity to develop long lasting relationships all the while making some great money along the way with relatively flexible hours.

This guide is designed to introduce you to the basic considerations of launching a babysitting business. We'll discuss the upside, the challenges, what babysitting is not, certifications and registrations as well as marketing efforts, interviewing families and operating your business. This guide will not discuss specifics on Child Care, CPR or First Aid. These are subjects that demand in professional, in-person education and interaction and can be obtained through the various certification programs available through the Red Cross which will be touched on in greater detail.



## CONSIDERATIONS

Babysitting has some pretty apparent upsides. For one, it's the type of work that works around your schedule. Typically you'll find the highest demand is on weekend nights although even throughout the week there's plenty of work to be had. If you prefer not to work too late on the weeknights you may consider a shorter but more frequent mid-afternoon schedule between when you and the children get out of school until when their parents get home. Once you're familiar with the routine, babysitting can be a fairly straight forward job as well; there's a natural progression from one activity to the next that the kids are accustomed to – you just need to be prepared for unexpected situations which may present themselves. Babysitting may provide you some time to work on homework or other personal projects but only when the job at hand presents an appropriate window of time – say if the kids have gone to bed or are watching TV. It's important to note however that any personal activities must always come second to the needs of the children you're babysitting – that's why you're getting paid.

BEYOND A FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE,  
BABYSITTING CAN BE DEEPLY REWARDING  
ON MANY OTHER LEVELS.

If you're even considering this as a potential job, the chances are good that you naturally gravitate toward being around children. If spending time with kids is already something you enjoy, babysitting becomes less of a job and more of a way to help kids develop and watch them grow up. Not only will you forge lasting relationships with the children but also with the parents and these are oftentimes worth more than their weight in gold.

Speaking of gold, one of the most obvious benefits to babysitting is the money you can make. Still, it can't be overstated that with great money comes great responsibility. There's a reason that not everyone is a babysitter and there's a reason that good babysitters are in high demand. And, there are things you can do to distinguish yourself as a good babysitter that will both justify higher hourly rates and increase your overall demand. More on that later.

First, let's look at the other side of babysitting; the challenges, what babysitting is not, and further considerations. Picture a crying two year old throwing a tantrum. How will you react? What if the child you're watching closes the front door on her finger. Will you know what to do? There are millions of situations that may present themselves and you as the babysitter must be prepared, willing and able to react accordingly. Not every challenging situation will involve tears or blood, even getting kids to eat their dinner, do their homework, brush their teeth and go to bed can be huge accomplishments demanding all your time and energy. Your aim however is to get through each of these hurdles as naturally and easily as possible. The more in tune with a routine the children are, the easier it will be to move through the night.

### WHAT BABYSITTING IS NOT

There are several things that babysitting is not. Babysitting is a profession in which someone is putting you in charge and leaving you responsible for their children's wellbeing and safety; that is your focus – nothing else. A babysitter is not the TV. A babysitter is not a video game. Babysitting is not your designated time to talk on the phone, do your homework or otherwise spend the time doing what you want to do. The schedule may allow for personal time but again, it's always second to the needs of the children.

### FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

When getting started it's important to evaluate your initial comfort levels; how many kids can you realistically babysit at once? What hours are reasonable to work? Are you prepared to sacrifice nights and weekends to spend babysitting? Once you're comfortable with the realities of what it means to be a babysitter, it's worth making sure that you have the right personality for the job. Do you naturally enjoy spending time with children? Are you mature, punctual and trustworthy? Most importantly, do you keep safety at the forefront of your mind? Check, check and check? Then you may very well be on your way to very rewarding new profession as a babysitter!



## **PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION**

As mentioned above there are things that you need to do before putting yourself out as a babysitter. These include getting certified in CPR, taking a babysitting course through your local Red Cross, YWCA or YMCA or local Boys and Girls Club and registering with various websites such as care.com, safesitter.org or sittercity.com. These online registrations will further help with your market presence and support your professional image.

The Red Cross offers many courses which will add knowledge and value to your professional services. From Babysitting Basics to Pediatric CPR/AED, Child Care – Preventative Health and Safety, Babysitter's Training and Pediatric First Aid/CPR and even Cat and Dog First Aid, the more courses you take the better prepared you'll be. The two courses that you can't do without however are as follows:

### **BABYSITTING BASICS**

This class and certification is available through the Red Cross online or onsite for \$25 and takes about 4 hours to complete. The course covers the business of babysitting, safety measures, how to play with kids of all ages, caring for kids and what to do in emergencies while giving you access to further resources including step-by-step instructions for skills such as spoon-feeding, templates for resumes and business cards and forms to aid parent interviews.

### **BABYSITTER'S TRAINING AND PEDIATRIC FIRST AID/CPR**

This is a combined course that teaches the knowledge and skills necessary to safely and responsibly give care for children and infants. The course helps to develop leadership skills, business practices the basics of child care and most importantly how to keep yourself and the children safe. This course takes two days to complete, costs \$140 and is only available at a Red Cross location.

AS AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATION,  
A RED CROSS CERTIFICATE IS IMPERATIVE AND GOES  
A LONG WAY TO MAKING YOU A BETTER AND MORE  
MARKETABLE BABYSITTER.



## **WINNING THE BID**

Once you've established that babysitting is for you and you've completed the necessary Red Cross certifications and online registrations it's time to evaluate what kind of babysitting you'd like to do. Do you want to focus on infants and toddlers or work more with kids who are at least potty trained. Or would you prefer to work with kids who are going to school, who can read and write? The more specific of a market you can target, the more of an expert you will become and the more you will be able to charge. Or you can be a jack-of-all-grades and open your services to anyone who needs them... as long as you're comfortable with any and all ages.

### **THE INTERVIEW:**

Now that you've found the market that's right for you, you're ready to begin interviewing families. Oftentimes you'll get started with friends or family but eventually, if you want to expand your business, you'll need to be prepared to work with referrals and people you may not have met before. When this time comes it's important to ask the right questions and make sure that they're as right for you as you are for them. Think of it as a two way interview.

### **RED FLAGS:**

When interviewing a new family you want to keep your eye out for red flags. When meeting the children, notice if they're particularly aggressive or badly behaved. Ask what duties you're expected to perform – if the client is asking you to be a house keeper, a dog walker and a cook in addition to being a babysitter, that's a red flag. Make sure there are established rules and some sort of overall organization; that the kids have an expected routine – a roadmap for you to follow. If the house is extremely messy, the parents are vague or unclear as to what their expectations are or anything else generally makes you uncomfortable in any way than this is probably not the family for you. Be prepared to thank them for their time and walk away. Remember, you're the professional. You've spent the time and energy to get certified and registered. You're very valuable and that's not to be taken for granted by any client.

## **HOW MUCH TO CHARGE**

There are many variables that go into how much you should charge as a babysitter. Generally though, the more experienced, educated and certified you are, the more active you are required to be with the children and the more children there are to be watched, the more you will be able to charge. It will also depend on where you live; big expensive cities demand higher rates than if you live in the suburbs or in the country. If you will be transporting kids from one activity to another or if you're expected to cook or prepare meals you can charge more as well. Care.com has a babysitter calculator that you should familiarize yourself with not only to make sure that you're earning what you're worth but also because that's what many parents use as a pay scale guideline.

It's safe to say that you should expect to start between \$10-\$12 an hour and move up from there. With each Red Cross certificate it's fair to ask for additional wages and for each year of experience it's reasonable to charge more accordingly. For each additional child you may add \$2-\$5 per hour and if you're cooking up a storm, charge an extra fee for dinner. At the end of the day your rate will be negotiated between you and the client, just keep in mind that the more service you can provide, the more education you have and the more experience you bring to the table, the more you'll be able to charge.



## FOOD AND HEALTH KNOWLEDGE

As previously mentioned the more you can bring to the table, the more you will be able to charge. In this case, if you literally can bring food to the table, you're bringing that much more value to the client and in turn can charge accordingly. You don't need to be a top chef, but learning the basics can go a long way to separating you from your competition. If you enjoy cooking, all the better! Pick up a few cook books; learn the basic techniques and how to properly use knives and other cooking equipment. Also, try to bring a health-conscious approach to what you're feeding the kids. The parents will appreciate the effort.



## HOW TO FIND CLIENTS

Now that you've established your going rate, it's time to find clients. The registration websites are a great place to establish a profile and a presence. If you're feeling so inclined you might consider setting up a website to highlight your experience, education, certifications and testimonials. There are plenty of resources to put together a quick and effective website to direct prospects to. Having a business website will also give you a more professional and established appearance.

From there, it's best to start with the lowest hanging fruit; family and friends. Make sure that everyone you know knows that you're a professional babysitter. Use social media outlets to connect with people you know who have kids and who may be in the market for a babysitter. Use all these resources to network – ask your friends and family if they know anyone who might need your

services from time to time and do the same on Facebook. Establish yourself as the go-to, authority on anything and everything babysitting.

If this doesn't drive the business you're hoping for, consider making flyers and business cards to distribute at local churches, preschools and day-care centers. Talk with teachers and principals at nearby elementary schools to let them know that you're a local resource should they know of anyone in the market for a babysitter. Find out when the local PTA meetings are being held and show up with business cards in hand. It won't take long for you to fill up your schedule employing these techniques. But now that you have interested clients, how do you know who are the right clients for you?

## HOW TO INTERVIEW CLIENTS

Going from clients interested in you to clients you're interested in is the all-important next step; the interview. Before committing to any sort of an arrangement you need to swing by the prospective clients' house to spend some time. You want to get to know the parents, meet the kids, have a look at the house – generally get a lay of the land. During this first meeting, get a clear understanding of what the clients are looking for in terms of hours, frequency and tasks. Learn about the typical routine; ask about homework, dinner, who is expected to make it, snacks, food allergies, TV, video games, other activities, if the kids can go outside, if you're expected to transport them anywhere, etc. You generally want to understand the house rules and the specifics of the expected routine.

If things seem to be going well you can move on to what the parents typically do regarding disciplinary actions, time outs and calming techniques specific to their children. Hopefully it's nothing you'll encounter but it's important that you know what the parents and the kids expectations are. As much as you're gathering information by asking specific questions you need to observe the household and the energy. Spend some time with the kids to joke and play a little. See if there's a connection. Again, if anything seems off or makes you uncomfortable, be prepared to thank them for their interest and move on to the next family. Not every prospect is perfect for you – babysitting is a highly personalized business and it's important that you're as comfortable with the family as they are with you.

## THE FIRST APPOINTMENT

Assuming the interview went well and you've come to an agreement on pricing and scheduling, make sure that you show up 15-30 minutes early the first time to get a more specific rundown of the house, the supplies and the expectations. Have the client show you where they keep the first aid kit, any other emergency supplies, flashlights and general cleaning supplies for simple messes. Have them walk you through any necessary alarm system instructions and make sure that they leave you a list of emergency contacts including their cell phone numbers, the neighbor's numbers, a doctor's number, poison control hotline number and all pertinent home information such as the address and phone number. This may seem like overkill, but always better safe than sorry. Clarify the routine, their expectations, when

they'll be home and how you'll be getting home. As you work with the client all this will become second nature but until then it's important to make sure you're both organized and ready for what's ahead. Before the parents leave always ask if there's anything else they should know about the kids. By this point you've probably covered all the bases, but just in case, it never hurts to ask.

Once you're on your own there are a few important things to remember. Aside from all the things you've learned along the way, keep basic safety at the forefront of your mind. Never tell the world through social media where you are babysitting. You need to protect yourself and the children you're in charge of.

REMEMBER YOU'RE THE BOSS – YOU'RE THE  
BABYSITTER, NOT THE TV OR THE VIDEO GAMES.  
YOUR JOB IS TO BABYSIT, NOT TALK ON THE PHONE,  
TEXT OR SPEND TIME ONLINE.

Again, you may find time to focus on homework or other activities but nothing supersedes the one and only priority of keeping an eye on the kids.

Lastly, if you were dropped off or picked up, always make sure you have your parents on the ready to come pick you up in case anything comes up while babysitting or after the parents come home; if for instance they're drunk or for any other reason unable to bring you home.

## RECAP

As you can see there's a lot more to babysitting than just showing up and watching TV. It can be rewarding far beyond the money you'll make – which can be significant, but it also is demanding and can present challenges that most people your age may find unbearable or simply not know how to react. That's why it's imperative to take as many Red Cross courses as possible so that you can be as prepared as possible. At the end of the day, babysitting is a noble and inspiring profession that presents students with the opportunity to develop personally and professionally and more importantly to participate in the lives of others.

