

sitterwise

CAREGIVER ADVICE & TIPS

BE PREPARED

In my bag are puzzles (one for younger kids and two for older), playdough, and coloring supplies/stickers. Each of these occupies a long period of time and is fun for the kids, if you get involved with them. All of this I bought at Target for a total of about ten dollars, markers, paper, and crayons included. I would highly recommend bringing playdough. I bought a small set that came with four colors and some toys from Target and it stayed in very good shape for all four years. I usually did the playdough with the kids on the floor of the bathroom, outside, or on the desk/coffee table depending on the ages of the children. Every kid I worked with got so excited to see the playdough. Also, the basics, trucks, balls, and blocks seem to never fail regardless of the gender.

When texting the parents ahead of time, I like to ask what kind of toys/activities their child enjoys. I've been able then to tailor my bag of toys to things that I might not normally have with me.

Do a Google Earth search for the address you are working at and see what shops, restaurants, libraries, and parks are nearby.



MAKE A GREAT IMPRESSION

I ask the parent, "What do I need to know about the children's routine for tonight?" Also check on any allergies, bedtime survival items, etc. I write down what they say.

Be super friendly and kind to the hotel staff. Remember they are watching you too!

Giving the parents details on what you did while they were gone is really appreciated. It also holds you accountable to play with the children as much as possible, because you want to tell the parents all the fun things you did with the children. Keep the details short, because the parents do not want to talk a lot once they get home.

Examples are: Their favorite toys were the mini slinky and glow sticks. Their favorite games were go fish and hiding an object to find.

Presenting the business card as soon as possible with the caregiver's name, cell phone number, and highlighted information on the back seems to really help the guests feel comfortable.

I text parents an update once during the night to let them know everything is great!

Letting them know how it's going/see their children are happily engaged (or peacefully sleeping) is very reassuring for most parents.

CONNECT WITH THE KIDS

I have never babysat for a toddler who does not love playing with Duplos.

Children LOVE when you tell the stories! I just make them up and they always want me to tell them another. (I usually use kids their age in the story and make it really fun or silly if they like that.)



If the kids are talking to you, listen and respond to them. Even if it's a delayed response, parents appreciate you acknowledging how their little ones are feeling and expressing themselves. It makes the parents feel more comfortable and the children feel more at peace too

I always get down on the floor when I get into the room to introduce myself to the littles.

ADDITIONAL TIDBITS

I have found that original Dr. Seuss books are guarantees for an easy bedtime, especially "Oh the Places You'll Go". Many times the kids have not read them and are unfamiliar with the stories, but the rhyme scheme often lulls them to sleep which is great.

La Costa and the Hotel Del have five dollar kid buffets in the restaurant for the children you are watching. I always tell the parents because it is a way to save them money. The Grand Del Mar has pretty affordable room service kid's meals and they don't mind if we get them (with parent permission of course).

Disney Scene It is really fun for older kids.

The 99 Cents Store is really great for coloring books and other toys.

I have found that puzzles aren't really worth bringing because the pieces get lost easily.

The parents enjoy when the child makes a craft and has something to keep with them (a painting, necklace, etc.)

Take a book light or kindle to read by when you put the children to sleep in the hotel room so that they can have their room dark to sleep in. Or you can slide a chair in the foyer next to the bathroom door (cracked) to read by the light from the bathroom. The children will rest better.