

Disability Campaign.org

Tips for Babysitting Kids with Disabilities



Image: NYMetroParents.com

1. **Ask questions.** Be inquisitive and ask the parents or primary caregiver questions. This will make you feel more comfortable and at ease. You can ask questions such as: *How does your child communicate? Is your child allergic to anything? Does your child have any physical boundaries? Or, Does your child take any medicine?* Asking these types of questions shows the parents that you want to take good care of their child.
2. **Meet the child before you babysit.** This is a great way for the child to become familiar with you and vice versa. Seeing how the parents interact with the child and becoming acquainted with the home will help you be prepared for when you babysit.

3. **Stick to the child's routine.** It's likely the child has a certain routine that he's comfortable with or that the parents enforce. Following the child's routine will provide him or her with structure and familiarity.
4. **Do fun, but safe activities.** Ask the parent what activities are not allowed and which the child prefers. Perhaps the child has a favorite toy or movie; if you have a talent or hobby such as drawing or playing an instrument, ask if you can integrate it into the activities you do. Consider indoor and/or outdoor activities so long as they are permitted.
5. **Remain calm during challenges.** It's vital that you maintain a calm demeanor if challenges arise. Know what calms the child down if he or she has a tantrum or an anxiety attack. Make sure that you know where emergency medications and contacts are kept. Don't hesitate to call the parent's if you have any questions or concerns. If there is a life threatening emergency, contact 911.
6. **Do your research.** If you know what kind of disability the child has, obtain more information about that disability. Knowing more about the disability will assist you in your caregiving and guide you to ask better questions.
7. **Know how to meet the child's need.** Be aware of what time the child takes medications, which special activities he or she needs to do and what makes the child uncomfortable so that you can meet his or her needs.
8. **Don't be too helpful.** A child with a disability may need extra assistance, but probably does not always need or want help. Encourage the child to do what he or she can.
9. **Remember to have fun.** Your ultimate goal is to make the child feel loved and comfortable, while remaining safe and healthy. Add humor, give a smile and be silly. If you enjoy your job and show it with your attitude and demeanor, your relationship with the child and the parents will be more pleasant.

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