

Do I have to tip my baby sitter?

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6 situations where it pays to give your sitter a little extra



Buena Vista/courtesy Everett Collection

Elisabeth Shue (left) in the 1987 movie, "Adventures in Babysitting."

Worried you could be committing a social faux pas if you don't tip your baby sitter? Don't be.

Many parents never tip the baby sitter, research shows. Roughly three out of four parents don't tip the baby sitter, [Care.com's](#) 2015 baby sitting survey of 1,000 parents found, and [UrbanSitter.com's](#) 2015 child care survey of 10,000 parents and baby sitters found that four in 10 parents don't. (Note that we are just talking about baby sitters here, and not nannies, who should get one week's to one month's pay and a gift from your child during the holidays as their tip, experts say.)

The tipping etiquette for baby sitters is not nearly as straightforward as with other professionals. "Tipping a sitter as you would a waiter in a restaurant is not normal," says advice columnist [April Masini](#). In other words, if you have a sitter that comes, does the job adequately and then goes home, there is no reason to pay her above her regular rate.

That's likely a relief to many parents given how much baby sitters are paid today. Baby sitter pay has jumped 28% in the past five years [to \\$13.44 an hour](#), according to a survey by Care.com. That means going out for four hours will cost you more than \$50 just for baby sitting; add in dinner and drinks for you and your spouse and the bill can easily top \$150.

Still, there are many instances when you should tip the baby sitter, says Lynn Perkins, the chief executive and founder of baby sitting booking service UrbanSitter. Like many etiquette situations, it boils down to being considerate and appreciating when a person goes beyond expectations. Here are six situations when you should give your sitter a little extra money.

Extra work

"If your sitter goes above and beyond the job description, you should tip her," Perkins says. That means she does things like cooks the kids dinner (beyond just popping chicken fingers in the oven), does a big cleanup job around your house (beyond just what the kids messed up while she was there), picks up the kids at an event or play date or does a big activity with the children (like overseeing — and cleaning up — a crafts project with them).

Difficult situations and illnesses

If your child is a bit sick and you have to leave him with a sitter, you should tip the sitter, says Perkins. And if you have a difficult child — say, one who is hard to get to bed — and the baby sitter actually gets him to bed on time, that can be worth a tip too, says Pamela Eyring, the president of [The Protocol School of Washington](#).

Unforeseen circumstances

Masini says that it's "the right thing to do" to tip the baby sitter if an unforeseen event happens that requires him to do more work. These might include things like a neighbor having to drop her child off for a bit unexpectedly or the child getting sick and the baby sitter having to take him to the doctor.

Timing

It's also important to tip the sitter (on top of paying her hourly rate for the extra time she stayed at your house) if you're running late getting home, says Eyring — since this lateness could have disrupted her plans; in this case, you'll want to tack on a 20% tip, she says. If you book her last-minute (say a few hours before you have to leave), it's also important to tip, Perkins adds.

Regular sitter

If you have a sitter who comes fairly regularly (weekly or biweekly on average), you may also want to tip her — though in this case, it may be appropriate to tip her at the end of the year, says Eyring. Experts say that in this situation, a night's pay and a small gift from your child is appropriate.

The big question many parents may now be asking is how much to tip. Perkins says that rounding up is often appropriate for a tip (roughly 42% of parents who tip the sitter do this, the UrbanSitter survey found), so if you were going to pay her \$52, give her \$55. Another way to do it is to tack on 10% to 15%, says Eyring.

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