

4-H Child Care Kits

Children are a lot like grownups and teenagers. When they are bored, they tend to get into trouble. It helps to be prepared when you arrive at your babysitting/child care job. You know the children's ages, so bring along a Child Care Kit that will keep the children busy, contented, and learning.

Begin now to prepare things for your Kit. It will save the day for you on many jobs. The toys you take must suit the developmental stages of the children. For example, infants and toddlers put everything into their mouths, so their toys must be very safe and washable.

Remember, there are so many things for children to learn. This is why it is easy to keep them very busy. They want to touch everything they see. Using senses of sight, taste, and touch is the way children become acquainted with the world.

As children grow older, they ask questions about everything. This is the way they learn. You may not be able to answer the questions, but always give truthful answers. This helps children to have confidence in you.

Preschoolers like to do things and make things. Older children enjoy collecting and more elaborate projects. All children enjoy role play, pretending to be other people, or animals, or even things.

Developmentally appropriate

Activities are right for children when they are suited to the child's age, abilities, and interests and when they encourage play.

Think about the children you know. What can they do? What are they learning? What interests them? Do not try to make them grow up. Plan developmentally appropriate activities, experiences suited to children's play.

Every profession has tools for the trade. And every professional has a tool kit. As a child care professional, you need to have handy a variety of materials for working with children. So, just as a doctor, nurse, teacher, mechanic, and others have their equipment ready, you will too.

This publication suggests three types of Child Care Kits—the Surprise suitcase, Dress-up wardrobe, and Treasure chest. These kits also may be entered as a fair exhibit. It is important to know how to match the materials to the ages and interests of the children. Before entering your exhibit, use the Kit with children so that you are sure



you have useful materials and an efficient way of organizing them. Write the children's ages and interests and how they responded to the materials. Keep these guidelines in mind as you gather items for your Kit.

Think of safety, children's ages and interests, and creativity and valuable learning. Too many toys can overstimulate children and make it hard for them to choose something interesting. Pack only a few toys and select them carefully.

Good toys

- *Attractive and interesting to them*
- *Well constructed, durable, and safe*
- *Matched to children's abilities*
- *Good for children of different ages*
- *Useful in various ways*

Safe toys

- *Free of small parts that they can swallow*
- *Well made (no sharp parts or splinters; will not pinch)*
- *Strong enough to hold the child's weight*
- *Painted with nontoxic, lead-free paint*
- *Shatter-proof*
- *Easily cleaned*
- *Not electric*
- *Checked frequently for safety*
- *Out of reach of younger children*

Think toy safety

Sharp edges

Toys of brittle plastic or glass can be broken easily, exposing dangerous, sharp cutting edges. Wooden, metal, and plastic toys sometimes have sharp edges due to poor construction.

Small parts

Tiny toys and toys with small removable parts can be swallowed or become lodged in a child's windpipe, ears, or nose. The noise-makers in some squeeze toys can be removed

and possibly swallowed. Poorly constructed seams on stuffed toys can break and release small pellets that can be swallowed or inhaled.

Loud noises

Toy caps and some noisemaking guns and other toys can produce sounds at noise levels that can damage hearing. The law requires the following label on boxes of caps producing noise above a certain level: "WARNING: Do not fire closer than 1 foot to the ear. Do not use indoors."

Electric toys

Improperly constructed, wired, or handled electric toys can shock or burn. Electric toys must meet mandatory requirements for maximum surface temperatures, electrical construction, and carry prominent warning labels. Toys with heating elements are recommended only for children over 8 years old. Teach children to use electric toys cautiously and under adult supervision.

Sharp points

Broken toys can expose dangerous prongs and knife-sharp points. Pins and staples on dolls' clothes, hair, and accessories can puncture an unsuspecting child. Even a teddy bear or stuffed toy can have barbed eyes or wired limbs which can cut or stab.

Propelled objects

Projectiles (guided missiles and similar flying toys) can be turned into weapons and can injure eyes in particular. Never allow children to play with adult lawn darts or other equipment with sharp points. Arrows or darts used by children should have soft cork tips, rubber suction cups, or other protective tips designed to prevent injury.

Wrong toy for the wrong age

Toys that may be safe for older children can be extremely dangerous in the hands of little ones.

Surprise suitcase

Ask yourself who will be using what you have in your suitcase. What do the children you care for like to do? What do they already have? What toys would fit their ages?

Have a variety of things for them to choose from. Children always like to play with something new, different, and belonging to someone else.

If you are babysitting for children in several families, it is a good idea to wash toys in your Child Care Kit after each family uses them. You do not want to spread germs from house to house.

If you watch which toys children play with, you will notice they may be cheap or expensive. A simple toy made from things found at home can be just as much fun and worthwhile as a costly one. If you use some imagination, you can choose and make toys for your Child Care Kit that will fit all the standards without costing much, if anything.

A few additional hints

- Take just a few things in your Child Care Kit each time.
- Change some items from time to time. Keep favorites in the kit all the time.
- If you know what you will be doing with the child during your visit, you can be prepared. For example, bathtime is fun and easier if you allow time for play in the bathtub and have a toy or two, such as a sponge, an egg beater, an empty detergent bottle or an old shaving brush. Bedtime will go more smoothly if you have a book to read or songs to sing.

Surprise suitcase ideas

Miscellaneous

boxes
blanket
magnet
magnifying glass
measuring cups
and spoons
clothespins
pillow
sponges
stuffed animal
squirt bottle
straws

Toys

a game to play with older children
beach ball
books
play dough
hand puppets
bean bags
deck of playing cards
play money
puzzles
shapes, numerals,
letters
small ball



Dress-up wardrobe

In their make-believe play, children frequently act out and talk about experiences and things that they have seen. This type of play is helped along with very simple materials.

To make a dress-up wardrobe, you'll need to collect some articles of clothing and accessories. Some of your uniforms, party clothes, and T-shirts and jackets from 4-H or Scouts will be special to a young child.

Dress

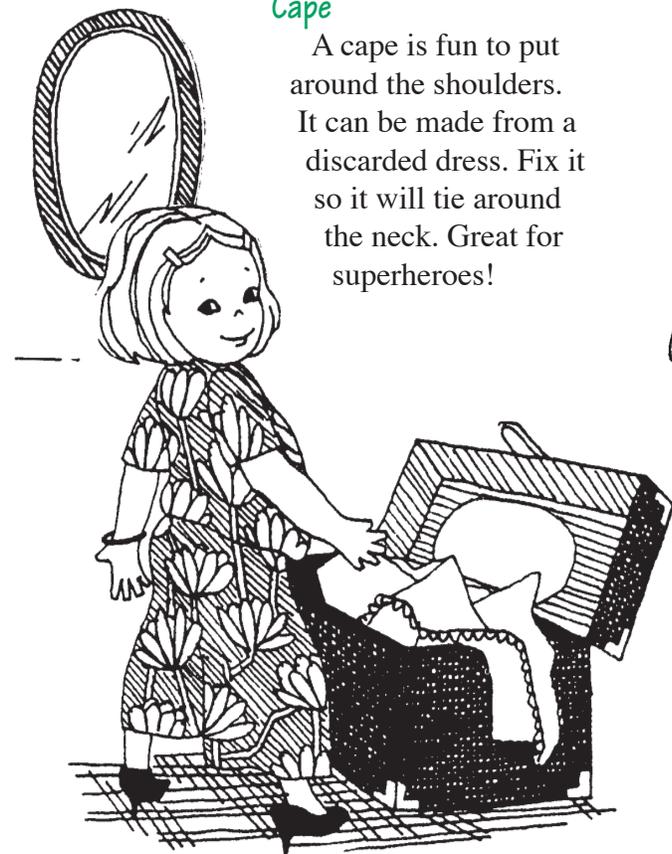
Take a tuck in the shoulders of an old dress of yours so it will fit a smaller child.

Apron

A worn or faded one from your home will delight a small child. Cut it down to size—or make a new one.

Cape

A cape is fun to put around the shoulders. It can be made from a discarded dress. Fix it so it will tie around the neck. Great for superheroes!



Twirling skirt

A full skirt with elastic around the waist will flare out when dancing and twirling.

Hat

Veils, flowers, and feathers can be added to make a hat creation. Hunting hats, baseball caps, and sports helmets are good.

Other accessories

Old purses, shoes, scarves, necklaces, and other jewelry add zest to the wardrobe.

You may want a variety of clothing and accessories in your kit so children can decide the theme. Or, you can choose a theme, such as cowhands, teenagers, adults, or dancers.



Treasure chest for creative art

Children can be very creative. They do not need coloring books. Just give them a blank sheet of paper and some raw materials. Then, let them explore and experiment. They may not make a picture of anything. They may choose simply to enjoy seeing what they can do.

Don't be surprised if children are more interested in the glue than in anything else. Sometimes they cut paper to practice using the scissors. They are not making anything.



Ideas for your treasure chest

Clean-up

sponge
paper towels
newspaper to cover
floor and table
old shirts to cover
clothing

Paper

aluminum foil
computer print-out
paper bags
envelopes
construction paper
wallpaper
notebook paper
wrapping paper
greeting cards
cardboard
magazines
tissue paper

Markers

crayons
chalk
felt-tip pens
ink pens
pencils

Collage

fabric
pinecones
leaves
thread
yarn
feathers
shells
beans, peas
boxes
paper rolls
cotton balls
toothpicks
pasta
packages
jewelry
buttons
beads
lace
ribbon

Supplies

paste
glue
scissors
ruler
string
tape
cups
needles

