

FREE

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for the long days and short years

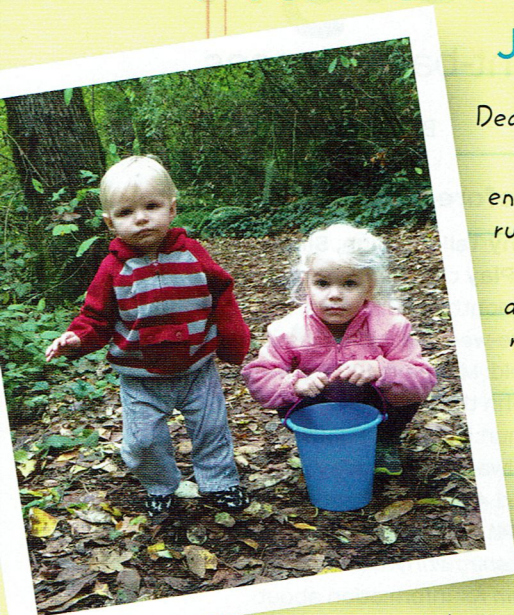
**SCHOOL
OPEN
HOUSE
GUIDE**

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the
food
issue

Adventures in Babysitting

Just a quick note before we flee.



Dear Babysitter,

Thank you for watching our two daughters today! We are sure you'll be just as enchanted by Edie, 3, and Maxine, 1, as we are. Here are some notes to help tonight run smoothly.

The girls can feed themselves at the table, as long as you chop hot dogs, grapes and marker caps into pieces they can't choke on. Just kidding! Maxine shouldn't eat marker caps, though she will try to at every opportunity.

Edie loves hard-boiled eggs, carrots and cottage cheese, except on the days they offend the very fiber of her moral being. She will ask you to read to her during dinner. Pause significantly at the end of each page so she knows to take another bite. Please note that dinner time is the most stressful sacred time of day in our home, so please do not use any electronics during meals, unless you are texting/tweeting/live Facebooking/Snapchatting about how amazing our kids are.

We left pumped breast milk for Maxine to drink from the bottle. If she doesn't take that, offer it in a sippy cup. If she doesn't take that, offer it in a regular cup. If she doesn't take that, spoon feed it to her. If that fails, repeat with cow's milk. If she still won't drink anything, put her in the bath. She knows she's not supposed to drink the bath water, so she chugs it like a champ.

We have attached emergency numbers for the girls' pediatrician, poison control, the next-door neighbors and Annie's headquarters in case the entire world has "run out" of macaroni and cheese and the girls must resort to eating whatever is being served for dinner in its place.

Maxine is allergic to eggs. Edie is allergic to down, cats and dust mites. Our dog Finn is allergic to grains, potatoes, peanut butter, dairy, duck, chicken, lamb, beef, elk, platypus and everything else except wild line-caught salmon, so please do not feed him any treats or table scraps.

Edie will tell you we sometimes let her watch cartoons. This is true, but do not let her watch any. We are not paying you \$17 an hour for our daughter to veg out in front of *Paw Patrol*.

Before the girls go to bed, they are expected to clean up their toys. Please help them put their things away in the labeled, KonMari-ed, IKEA-hacked organization system we have painstakingly installed. And no matter how this system may appear, we definitely have not given up and simply dumped armfuls of toys into whatever bin is closest.

Before bedtime, brush the girls' teeth, being careful to not get a finger bitten off. The girls go down at the same time, so you will likely need to clone yourself to attend to both their needs. If that is not possible, block out their tantrums with the ear plugs found in the Costco-sized container in the closet.

Sing Maxine *You Are My Sunshine* as she drifts off to sleep. Sing Edie *Frosty the Snowman* as she wiggles, makes odd honking noises and flails like a fish in her bed.

Once the girls are asleep, please make yourself comfortable! Help yourself to anything in the fridge, except the double fudge Tillamook ice cream, which you are not to touch under any circumstance.

We will be gone until 9:30. Or 11. Or tomorrow around noon, depending on the line at Screen Door. And if we arrive home only to continue sitting in the dark car, don't be alarmed. We're simply savoring a few extra minutes of rare, delicious freedom. ■

— Catherine Ryan Gregory

Catherine Ryan Gregory is a Portland writer and mother of two. She loves hiking, can't keep the house clean and talks about boobs way more often than is socially appropriate. She blogs at TenThousandHourMama.com.