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Beyond Parenting Basics:
The International Nanny Association's Official Guide to In-Home Child Care

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CONTENTS

Introduction.....	5
1. Safety.....	7
2. Health.....	20
3. Nutrition.....	31
4. Emergency Preparedness.....	42
5. Physical Development.....	59
6. Cognitive and Creative Development.....	70
7. Social and Emotional Development.....	84
8. Language and Literacy Development.....	96
9. Learning Environment.....	104
10. Caregiving Routines.....	113
11. Guidance.....	129
12. Family, School, and Community Relationships.....	135
13. Professionalism.....	141
About the Authors.....	150

INTRODUCTION

Caring for a child is a big responsibility. From the moment a caregiver takes charge, the responsibility of the child's safety, health and general wellbeing rests with the child care provider.

Beyond Parenting Basics: The International Nanny Association's Official Guide to In-Home Child Care was developed to help prepare caregivers and parents for the responsibility that comes along with being a primary caregiver.

Co-authored by Sara McCormack Hoffman, director of the Professional Nanny Program at Minnesota State College and INA Credentialed Nanny and author of *Nanny to the Rescue!*, *Working Mom's 411* and *A Mom's Ultimate Book of Lists*, Michelle LaRowe, *Beyond Parenting Basics* is the perfect resource for anyone who desires to become a better caregiver.

Designed for use by those wishing to expand their knowledge of child care, *Beyond Parenting Basics* is perfect for those preparing for a career as an in-home child care provider or those already working in the field who wish to take the International Nanny Association's Nanny Credential Exam to become an INA Credentialed Nanny. *Beyond Parenting Basics* also serves as an important resource for parents who wish to improve their parenting skills through the expansion of their child care knowledge.

SAFETY

Adequate supervision is the key to child safety. Nannies can anticipate dangers that a child may face based on the child's age, physical ability, intellectual development, and the potential hazards in the environment. Ideally, accidents can be avoided by childproofing a home, making sure that toys are developmentally appropriate for a child, monitoring children's play, and using safety devices such as cabinet locks, baby gates, and outlet plugs. Nannies should not assume that children have the ability to make sound judgments about their safety. Instead, nannies should teach children how to be aware of their surroundings by encouraging them to notice smells, tastes, movements, sounds, and textures so that children become accustomed to what is familiar and what is unusual. As nannies explain why they take certain safety precautions and demonstrate safety measures throughout the day, children will gradually adopt those safety strategies themselves.

Safety for Infants and Toddlers

The most common hazards for very young infants are shaking, choking, older siblings, pets, falls, drowning, burns, and fire. Shaken Baby Syndrome occurs when an adult becomes frustrated by not being able to soothe a crying child, for example, and shakes the baby hard enough to cause spinal injuries, seizures, blindness, brain damage from bleeding, swelling, or death. A young infant's neck muscles are too weak to fully support the head, especially when the baby is abruptly shaken. Nannies should always support an infant's head and neck when lifting and holding an infant. If a nanny feels too angry or impatient to care for a baby safely, she should place the baby in a crib and step out of the room briefly until she is calm enough to turn her attention to the baby's needs.

Any object smaller than a baby's fist could fit into a baby's mouth and be a potential choking hazard. Tiny objects, including food and toys of older siblings, as well as strings, ribbons, and cords should always be

out of an infant's reach. A general guideline for safe toys for infants is that they should be no smaller than 1 ½-1 ¾ inches in diameter, but a young infant's fist is a reliable guide to determine what will fit into the child's mouth. Common infant toys such as mobiles, activity boards, rattles, squeeze toys, mirrors, balls, dolls, and stuffed animals should be unbreakable, securely sewn, free from small parts that could be chewed or pulled off, and rounded on the edges. A crib mobile should be removed as soon as an infant can reach it. Babies may be coordinated and strong enough to grasp the objects on the mobile which could result in the baby becoming strangled by the cords.

Siblings do not intentionally try to harm an infant, but accidents can occur when a sibling tries to carry, hug, or share food and toys with a baby. Toddlers, preschoolers, and even young school-aged siblings may not realize how easily an infant could roll into their path, pick up a small object, or lose balance. Therefore, young siblings should never be left alone with an infant.

Pets can be dangerous if an infant pulls their fur, pokes them in the mouth, ears, or eyes, or moves in a way that startles the animal. Even gentle-natured pets can bite or scratch a child. Pets with a history of aggression towards children should definitely not be around infants because of the unpredictability of both infants' and animals' behavior. Lizards, rodents, turtles, and iguanas often carry salmonella which can cause illness when children touch them and then suck on their hands.

Falls typically occur when an adult has not anticipated an infant's ability to roll over. It is critical to be with an infant when the child is on a changing table, sofa, or any other surface from which the child can fall. Keep supplies within reach when changing a baby's diaper and always stand by the changing table or keep one hand on the baby to prevent her from falling. Infants should be strapped into infant seats, bouncers, and swings. As a baby gains strength, she can tip over an infant seat, so it is recommended not to place an infant seat on a table. It is safe to leave an infant unattended only if the child is in a crib or playpen with sides that are high enough to prevent the child from rolling out. It is also important to realize the power with which an infant's head can jerk backwards if an adult is not holding the head and neck securely.

Drowning can also occur if a baby is not held with one hand during a bath. It is essential to stay with an infant during the entire bath so that the baby does not slip into the water. Infants can drown in as little as two inches of water.

Burns are most likely to result from spills of hot liquid or food when an adult is drinking and eating while holding an infant, particularly when an infant moves suddenly or reaches for the food or cup. An infant can also be burned from hot formula or breast milk in a bottle. Nannies should drop milk onto the inside of their wrists to test the temperature of the liquid before feeding a baby. Since there can be hot spots in liquid that is heated in a microwave oven, formula and breast milk should be heated by placing a bottle into a container of warm water.

Adults should never smoke around an infant, not only because of health concerns such as asthma, respiratory infections, and ear infections, but because of the risk of hot ashes falling on the baby. Infant clothes should be flame-resistant and made without synthetic material such as polyester so that they do not melt onto the baby if a spark ignites the clothes. Pajamas should also fit snugly to help prevent the flow of oxygen if they were to catch on fire. Some typical causes for fires in the home are space heaters, overloaded electrical outlets, smoking, and frayed electrical wires. Smoke detectors should be installed throughout the house on each floor and should be tested each month to ensure that they are operating properly and that battery-operated detectors are fully charged.

There are some infant safety precautions related specifically to sleeping. Although there is no known cause of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), infants who sleep on their backs are less likely to die of SIDS than babies who sleep on their stomachs. Babies tend to roll onto their stomachs if they sleep on their sides, so the back position is recommended for sleeping infants. If a baby's physician gives instructions for a baby with particular health problems to be put to sleep on its stomach, those instructions should be followed. Additional risk factors for SIDS are infant exposure to cigarette smoke either prenatally or after birth, sleeping on sheepskins, foam pads and pillows or comforters that may block a baby's nose and mouth, and a family history of SIDS. According to a study by Kaiser Permanente published in the October

2008 issue of the Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine, infants who sleep with fans in their rooms have a 72 percent lower risk of SIDS.

Cribs need to have slats that are no wider than 2 3/8 inches apart so the baby's head cannot become wedged between the slats. Paint on older cribs may contain lead which is a hazard when babies are old enough to chew on the railings. The safest way to keep a baby warm is to dress her in a blanket sleeper instead of using blankets, fleece coverings, or comforters that could suffocate the baby. Pillows and stuffed animals should never be in a crib because of a similar risk of suffocation. The crib mattress should fit securely with no more than a finger's width between the mattress and the sides of the crib. The crib sheet should tuck well under the sides of the mattress and if crib bumpers are used, they should be non-pillow like and securely fastened on all sides of the crib so that they do not fall away from the crib slats. Once a child is mobile, bumpers should be removed so that they aren't used to help a child pull up and over the crib rails.

Infants should always be buckled into an infant car seat in the back seat regardless of the length of the drive. The center seat is the ideal place to install an infant car seat. Car seats should never be placed next to a side release air bag. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children should remain rear-facing until they reach the maximum weight or height allowed by their car seat manufacturer or at least until age 2. It is critical to read the instructions that come with the car seat to ensure that it is installed correctly and that the straps are adjusted snugly. Five-point harnesses are recommended since they secure the baby at the shoulders, hips, and crotch. It is important to make sure that a car seat fits well in the vehicle and does not shift either side-to-side or forward when the car is moving. Car seats should be registered with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in case a car seat model is recalled. It is also important for children under 40 pounds to be buckled in a car seat when they are flying in an airplane so that they are not thrown or crushed during turbulent flights. The airplane seat belt should hold the car seat securely in place.

Childproofing a Home and Yard

When a home is adequately childproofed, children can be allowed to move more freely as they learn how to reach, sit, crawl, stand, walk, and climb. Childproofing does not remove the need for regular supervision of a child, but it does reduce the dangers that could result from a child's curiosity and investigations.

Openings such as windows, doors, and stairwells need to be blocked to prevent falls. Window guards allow a window to be opened no more than three inches from the sill. Furniture should be moved away from windows since children will eventually be able to climb and lean out an open window. Screens can be pushed out of windows, so children who are alone should never have access to windows with screens. Doors should either be fastened with a lock at adult eye level or should have doorknob guards that cannot be turned unless they are squeezed. Safety latches on lower cabinets and drawers should be installed so that they do not open at all. Children's fingers can be pinched in doors that open slightly. Children can also reach into drawers with sharp knives, utensils, and scissors unless the drawers are securely latched. Safety gates with a straight top edge should be screwed into the wall at the top and bottom of stairs. If stairs have widely spaced banisters, they should be covered with netting, plastic, or acrylic that is specifically designed to protect children from falling through these openings. Baby walkers are extremely dangerous since babies can tip over, fall down stairs, pinch their fingers, and reach items that are normally not within their reach. Stationery activity centers without wheels are a much safer alternative for children.

Precautions to prevent children from heat and shock include shielding radiators, fireplaces and wood stoves with radiator covers and fireproof safety gates or screens as well as fireproof padding around a hearth. Matches and lighters should never be within a young child's reach. In bathrooms and kitchens, electrical appliances such as hair dryers, curling irons, shavers, coffee pots, and toasters should always be unplugged when they are not being used. Circuit-breaker electrical outlets should also be installed in bathrooms. In other rooms, wires from electrical appliances such as computers and televisions should be fastened to the floor with electrical tape or safety staples. Electrical outlets should be blocked by installing safety plates with sliding or turning outlet

covers, or with plastic safety plugs. In the kitchen, plastic stove knob covers or a stove shield will prevent a child from turning on or touching a burner. Pot handles on the stove should be positioned over the stove so a child cannot reach the handle and tip over a pot of hot food. The temperature of water heaters should be set below 120 degrees Fahrenheit to prevent scalding, particularly because children's skin is more sensitive and scalds more easily than an adult's skin.

Crushing from heavy furniture can be prevented by screwing free-standing bookcases and high chests of drawers to the wall. Heavy books should be packed tightly on shelves within a child's reach so they cannot fall onto the child. Heavy objects should not be placed on furniture that can tip over. Side tables should not be top heavy since they could tip easily when a child pulls himself up by holding onto the table edge. Injuries from sharp corners of tables can be avoided by using corner guards and padding. Heavy lids and doors should be removed from chests and unused refrigerators/freezers so that they do not fall onto a child's head, arms, or hands. Tablecloths should not be used since children can pull the cloth and the sharp, hot, heavy objects from the table onto themselves. Children can be crushed, pinched, or otherwise injured by exercise equipment, so the equipment should either be in a locked room or the child should be in a playpen or confined area while a parent uses the equipment. Electric garage doors should stop or reverse themselves when they touch an object so that children are not crushed under a closing door. If the door does not stop when it touches a large roll of paper towels, it is not safe for children to be in the garage.

Choking, strangulation, and suffocation can be prevented in several ways. Looped cords for window blinds and shades should be cut and the cords should be wrapped around a cleat to keep them out of reach of children. To prevent choking, objects smaller than a child's fist should never be within reach of an infant or toddler. Toddlers must be constantly supervised when they play with small objects such as dried beans in a sand and water table because they may choke on the small objects or put them up their nostrils. A woman's purse is filled with potential choking hazards, so it should also be out of reach of children.

Plastic bags, balloons (inflated or not inflated), jewelry, nail files and clippers, cosmetics, and other personal care items are additional

choking hazards. Children can climb into washers, dryers, and unused freezers and refrigerators with doors that do not open from the inside. These items must have their doors removed to prevent a child's death.

Children can be poisoned from a variety of items both in and out of the home. Check the safety of houseplants and outdoor plants to see if they are poisonous to touch or chew. All houseplants should be out of a child's reach even if a plant is not poisonous since children can tip over the pot or eat the dirt. All medications should be in locked cabinets well out of reach of children. Medication should also have child-resistant tops. Cleaning solutions in the kitchen, bathroom, and laundry area should be kept on high shelves or locked cabinets. Labels such as Mr. Yuk stickers can be placed on containers of poisonous cleansers, but the containers should still be stored out of reach and out of sight of children. If a child is allowed into the workshop and garage, all poisonous substances such as varnish, paint, gasoline, and lawn care products should either be in locked containers or on high shelves. The local poison control center telephone number should be posted and entered into a cell phone.

Carbon monoxide poisoning can be prevented by using a carbon monoxide detector that has been approved by the Underwriter's Laboratories. They should be installed on the wall or ceiling just outside sleeping areas. All appliances that use oil, kerosene, gas, or wood should be installed and maintained properly to prevent accumulation of carbon monoxide.

Special precautions should be taken with guns. Many accidental deaths occur when children play with guns, so it is essential that guns be unloaded and equipped with a safety lock. Guns and ammunition should be stored in separate locked areas. Parents and nannies should make sure that guns in homes of people they visit are also stored properly so that children do not have access to them. Some school age children may become desensitized to violence from watching violence on television or electronic games (or in some cases, by observing violence in their family or neighborhood) and may think that shooting someone is the way to solve conflicts.

When children play outdoors on play equipment, swing sets and play structures should be anchored securely to the ground so that they do not tip or break under the weight of children. They should be positioned at

least six feet from fences and walls. At least ten inches of soft, absorbent mulch, sand, wood chips, or grass should be under play structures to cushion falls. Children can fall from monkey bars, so they should not be part of a swing set. If a family has a riding lawnmower, young children should not be given rides because of the danger of falling and becoming pinched or crushed by the mower. Driveways can be particularly dangerous when drivers inadvertently back up without realizing a child is in the way. Walk completely around a car before driving and make sure that someone is holding a child who could dart toward a moving car.

Children should always wear a sunscreen that provides protection from both UVA and UVB sun rays. A Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15 should be worn to prevent sunburn. If a child's skin becomes slightly pink in five minutes without a sunscreen, an SPF of 15 will protect the child for 5×15 minutes for a total of seventy-five minutes.

Sunscreens with higher SPF levels will protect the child for longer periods (for example, $5 \times 35 = 175$ minutes or about three hours) as long as the sunscreen is reapplied after a child swims or wipes off the sunscreen. Sunscreen should be applied thirty minutes prior to sun exposure and be reapplied according to the manufacturer's instructions. Children should also be encouraged to wear hats and sunglasses when in the sun.

In locations that have mosquitoes and ticks, children need insect repellent that has no more than thirty percent of the chemical, DEET. DEET containing products should not be applied to children under two months of age. Some potential dangers of insect bites are Lyme disease, malaria, yellow fever, and encephalitis. Children who have been outside in areas where ticks may be present should be checked by an adult from head to toe so that all ticks can be removed. Focus particularly on areas in folds of skin such as the armpits, behind the ears, on the scalp, behind the knees, and in the groin area to locate and remove ticks. To remove a tick, use tweezers and grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull the tick out straight. Use soap and water to wash the area. To dispose of the tick, place it in a plastic bag, seal it and throw it away. Protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts, long pants, hats, socks, and shoes also protect children from both sun exposure and insect bites.

Children can drown in toilets, buckets, bathtubs, hot tubs, spas, pools, ponds, lakes, rivers, and oceans. Young children should never be

left alone around any of these bodies of water. Water should be poured out of containers immediately after they are used. Pools should be surrounded with self-latching and closing gates that are at least five feet high. Emergency numbers, telephones, and rescue equipment should always be available when children are using pools or natural bodies of water. Children should wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life vests when they are on boats or near natural bodies of water. The flotation devices should fit securely and be fastened correctly. Flotation devices help children to keep their heads above water, but they do not ensure children's safety. Children over age four should have swimming lessons to help prevent drowning, but they should still be supervised closely when they are in the water. Some parents may choose to have their infants, toddlers or preschoolers have swimming lessons, too. Although young children may develop a sense of familiarity and comfort through their lessons, parents may develop a false sense of security about their children's safety around water. When young children immerse their heads under water, they may swallow too much. Children sometimes develop convulsions when their body tries to correct the fluid and salt imbalance that results from excessive water in their bodies. They are also at greater risk for hypothermia (low internal body temperature) when they stay in the water too long.

Safety for Preschoolers and School Age Children

When a child has outgrown their forward-facing car seat they should ride in a booster seat. A child has outgrown a forward-facing car seat when he has reached the maximum height or weight limit allowed by the manufacturer; has shoulders that are above the harness slots, or his ears have reached the top of the seat. Children should ride in a harnessed seat as long as possible, preferably until they turn four. Some car seats are designed for children up to eighty pounds and are ideal for both protecting children from potential injury and enabling children to see more easily out of car windows. Children should never be left in a car without an adult since they could have heatstroke if a car becomes too warm. On a hot day, the temperature in a car could get up to forty degrees hotter than the temperature outside. Within five minutes a car could become hot enough to endanger a child. Children could also be vulnerable to

strangers who could either take them from the car or drive the car away with the child inside. Children should not be allowed to play in a running car since they could shift the brakes or gears and set the car in motion. Preschoolers should also be kept away from parking lots and driveways unless someone is supervising or the area is blocked to prevent cars from entering or leaving.

When children begin to ride scooters and bicycles, they should be fitted with a bicycle helmet to reduce the risk of head or brain injury from falls. A helmet should not slip around, but should cover the child's head comfortably. The Snell Memorial Foundation and the American National Standards Institute provide stickers for helmets that meet or exceed their standards. Elbow and knee guards also protect skin from scrapes and bruises. If children are required to use these protective devices from the moment they begin to use a scooter or bicycle, they are less likely to resist using protection as they become older.

When children are old enough to participate in team or individual sports, they should always wear protective clothing and equipment associated with the sport such as eye, mouth, and shin guards and helmets, drink water regularly to prevent dehydration, and be aware of other players before they swing, bat, jump, or dive. Clothing should be appropriate for the sport so that it does not interfere with movement or become tangled or caught. Footwear specific to the sport should be used to prevent damage to the feet. When children participate in gymnastics, the equipment needs to be properly maintained and a spotter needs to be present at all times to reduce the risk of falls.

School-aged children are old enough to learn about home and stranger safety. Nannies can teach children self-care skills that build children's awareness and confidence. These safety skills include the ability to lock and unlock doors and windows; tell time; use a phone to contact parents and emergency numbers such as 911, neighbors, and an operator; respond to a caller without revealing personal information about the family; write and read instructions; follow established rules and directions; locate a first aid kit and know what to do for a nosebleed, burn, bruise, or minor cut; locate a flashlight when electricity goes out; exit the house in case of fire and remain in a previously determined meeting place; prepare a snack and clean up afterwards; and respond safely if a

stranger comes to the door. Some important numbers to post or enter into a cell phone are parent work and cell numbers, emergency neighbor/friend contacts, telephone numbers of relatives, and emergency community numbers such as the fire, police, ambulance, and poison control center.

In regard to stranger safety, teach children to be aware of unusual behavior from adults. Practice role-playing situations with a child to help them know that they should talk to a trusted adult if another adult or teenager spends an excessive amount of time with them without others around; buys expensive gifts or food for them or gives them money; intrudes upon their privacy in the bathroom or bedroom; continues to tickle or fondle them when they're showing signs of discomfort or asks the adult to stop; volunteers to care for them without pay; spends more time with them than with peers; and asks them to keep secrets. Describe to preschool children that good feelings are those that a child wants to share with others. Bad feelings are those that give rise to guilt, uncertainty, shame, or embarrassment. Bad feelings that arise when a child is with an adult should be shared with a trusted adult so that the child does not become isolated or start to blame him or herself for actions that are requested by an adult. Reassure children that they will not get into trouble for telling someone about their concerns about an adult. Let school age children know that adults who have children's best interest in mind do not ask children to play secret games, to transport a child against his or her will or without the parents' knowledge, or even to ask children for directions. Adults who know children by name, even if the children have never met them, may have listened to children talking to each other or read the children's names on backpacks. When children feel uncomfortable about the advances of an adult, they should say "No" in a deep, loud voice to startle the adult. They can also say, "Stop, don't come any closer" or "Stop, no I don't like that." Children should be taught to run if they have the opportunity. If they are grabbed by an adult, they should shout in a low voice to distinguish their cry of help from the typical high-pitched screams of children.

Most importantly, if a child reports any unusual, inappropriate, or dangerous behavior of an adult to a nanny, the nanny is required to report the suspected abuse to a child protection agency or county social service

agency. Nannies are also required to report suspected child abuse or neglect if a child has physical injuries from burning or physical punishment, if prescribed medication is withheld, or a child does not have adequate clothing, food or supervision, if parents use drugs or expose children to emotional trauma from verbal or physical domestic abuse, if a child shows any physical signs of having been sexually abused, including signs of withdrawal, aggression, excessive tantrums, bruises on the genitals, seductive behavior around adults of the opposite sex, reluctance to undress in front of parents or trusted relatives, or other behavior that is not typical of the child based on previous experience and observations. Children often know the anatomical names of their genitals, so a nanny should not assume that a child has been sexually abused if he or she is familiar with the terms penis or vagina. It is also important for nannies to know that abusive parents rarely have a desire to actually inflict pain on their children. Many abusive parents were abused themselves when they were children, but their abuse toward their children may be related to social isolation from other adults, inadequate parenting skills, or low tolerance for stress.

Internet safety is also important to teach to school-aged children. Guidelines for safe Internet use can be posted near the computer and reviewed periodically with children so they understand the importance of following those rules. Nannies and parents can help children understand some of the potential risks of Internet use such as harassment or threats, financial harm from sharing credit card information, invasion of privacy when personal identification information such as home and email addresses and phone numbers are entered into contests or surveys, verbal abuse from other children in chat rooms, exposure to inappropriate information that is racist, violent, sexist, or simply inaccurate, gambling losses from placing bets using a parent's credit card, and physical harm from pedophiles who arrange meetings with their online contacts.

To prevent some of these Internet dangers, children should know when they are allowed to use the computer, what sites they may visit, how to handle requests for personal information, what topics to avoid in chat rooms, and what unusual circumstances to bring to a nanny's or parent's attention. Young children should use the Internet only with adult supervision. Older children should have time limits on their computer use

so that it does not replace physical and social activity and reading. Computers can be placed in public rooms of the home such as a family room rather than private rooms such as the bedroom so that children can be monitored more closely. Children can be taught basic netiquette so that their conversations online are respectful and polite. Software that blocks certain sites could be installed on the computer if a parent wants extra security for their children. If children report that they have seen or heard offensive material on the Internet, thank the child for telling you and report the objectionable material to the Internet Service Provider to see if they can filter or restrict offensive sites or email messages. Child pornography sites can be reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Use the computer as a teaching tool rather than a recreational babysitter. Help children to understand the power of advertising and look at sites with them to help them differentiate between credible sites and sites that take advantage of people's lack of information, fears, and vulnerabilities.