



Ten Tips:

Effective Nanny Screening

1. Verify applicant identity.

Require that the nanny show you original documents confirming her identity (driver's license, passport, college ID card, etc.) at the beginning of the job interview. At least one document should have a photo. Do not accept photocopies, as these can disguise alterations. Consider making a copy.

2. Require an application.

A formal job application should include the candidate's name, address, all phone numbers, and a chronological job and educational history. HomeWork Solutions shares their [nanny job application form](#) free of charge. Confirm name and address agree with the photo ID.

3. Require references.

Character and employment references should not be friends and family of the applicant.

Red Flag: Candidate cannot or will not provide non-related references.

4. Interview carefully.

Make sure you have the candidate speaking more than you are! Behavioral interviewing is a best practice. Ask the candidate to relate her history to a particular situation. For example, "Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a crying baby. What did you do? How did you feel?" Evaluate her experiences and responses against your requirements.

5. Check references.

Personally speak to all references. Verify how they know the applicant. Ask questions and wait for answers. Avoid giving verbal clues of agreement (umhum) or disagreement (really?). Families using the services of a professional nanny referral agency are advised to check the candidate's references themselves, even though the agent has already done so.

When talking to a nanny's references, try to obtain a third party or 'wild card' reference. This would be someone else known by both the reference and the candidate whom you may use as an additional reference. Third party references are invaluable, as they have most likely not been cherry-picked by the candidate and have not been briefed on the reference check ahead of time.

6. Schedule a second, working interview.

This should be a time when you and the children are both present. Allow the applicant to observe your typical family rhythms, patterns, and interactions. Allow some time for the applicant to interact with the children independently (you observe). Pay the applicant for her time.

7. Schedule a second, working interview.

For the live-in applicant, has she ever lived away from home before? Is she mature enough for the relocation? Does her family support her (if a younger candidate)? For the live-out applicant, does she have a reasonable, reliable means of transportation to your home daily? **NOT** her boyfriend dropping her off or catching a ride with a friend!

8. Obtain consent to perform a background check.

The candidate's signed consent is needed to order the pre-employment background check. The firm conducting the background check will have a document available for your use. Families hiring without the services of a nanny referral agency are advised to purchase the criminal background check from [NannyVerify.com](https://www.NannyVerify.com).

Red Flag: If the candidate refuses to sign the consent or provide her SSN, DMV license number and/or date of birth, move on immediately.

9. Begin the background check with an SSN trace.

A SSN trace will provide all names and addresses associated with this Social Security Number over the last seven years as known to the credit bureaus. This is **NOT** a credit check but relies on header file information from the credit bureaus, created by such actions as applying for a car loan, rental application, utility application, insurance application, cell phone service application and other related activities. Services such as [NannyVerify.com](https://www.NannyVerify.com) make these checks easily available. You should also validate the data in the SSN trace with the chronology of the candidate's experiences you have already established.

10. Finalize background checking.

Best practices are to search criminal records under all names and in all jurisdictions as reported on the SSN trace. Consider including Driver's License History, sex offender registry and National Criminal Records Locator (a database) checks.

A word to the wise - be very wary of 'instant' background checking services, the online services that let you check out your sister's boyfriend's history. These rely on compiled databases, do not cover all jurisdictions, generally do not include misdemeanor offenses, and are by definition out of date the day they are published. Court systems charge for database dumps, and with more than 3,000 jurisdictions across the country, it is economically unfeasible for the databases to update any more frequently than semi-annually or annually.



WARNING! Detecting Fake References

Because nannies work in private homes, they have an easier time 'faking' references' than applicants with former business employment. The nanny applicant may arrange with a relative or friend to pose as a former boss. The applicant provides a phone number or other contact information, and when the hiring family contacts this person, s/he receives a glowing report about the applicant. How can this be detected?

Fake references have been briefed by the applicant, but they are typically not very good at their job. Change minor details of the nanny applicant's story when talking to references and expect to be corrected. If the reference doesn't tell a story that agrees with the applicant's, this is a huge red flag.

Trust Your Instincts!

Don't worry that your spouse or coworker might think you are paranoid. If your gut says there is something wrong, move on to other candidates.

DO NOT...

1. Employ a nanny without checking references and employment history.
2. Ignore unexplained gaps or discrepancies in work and education history - always check them out until you are completely satisfied.