



Ten Tips: Questions Nannies Should Ask

All too often, both the interviewing nanny and the hiring family are totally new to the “nanny world.” Both parties have their own ideas of what to expect; however, it is common for important parts of the nanny-family relationship to be completely overlooked in the job interview because neither party asked the right questions. The following are important areas of conversation that the nanny wants to make sure she covers in the job interview.

1. Childcare duties

Ask the family to be specific about their expectations. Rephrase their expectations back to them to be sure you understand. "So, you expect me to prepare Suzie's breakfast and lunch, include outdoor play time weather permitted, tidy up after her messes, and launder her clothes and bedding weekly, correct?" You will want to cover any allergies, dietary restrictions and health concerns here, especially if you will be responsible for administration of medications.

2. Hours

Are they defined or flexible? How much notice of schedule changes? Any weekend or night work required?

3. Compensation, taxes, and a work agreement

Ask for [compensation in hourly wage terms](#), and work out a weekly guarantee if possible. Will you be paid every week of the year, even if family doesn't need you for some or all of a week? Address overtime. How frequently will you be paid and how are employment and income taxes to be handled? Most nannies prefer direct deposit payroll – they don't appreciate having to remind busy parents that it is their payday or having to run to the ATM to make a deposit after work on Friday. Ask for a copy of the family's Nanny Work Agreement to review.

4. Benefits

Full time nannies typically expect 2 weeks paid time off per year. This covers vacation, sick and personal time off. It is common to coordinate one week of the nanny's paid leave to coincide with the family's holiday plans. What about national holidays? Are all paid, some, none? Spell out the details. A holiday that falls on a weekend is typically observed on the prior Friday if it falls on Saturday, or the following Monday if it falls on Sunday. Are there any other benefits - health insurance, cell phone, or club memberships?

5. Housekeeping duties

All nannies should expect to be responsible for their charge's meals and laundry and tidying up after activities. Some families request "Light Housekeeping" - make sure this is defined! A family that needs the heavy cleaning done (floors, bathrooms, windows) typically has better luck adding a weekly or bi-weekly cleaning service.

6. Family discipline philosophy

You and the family must act as a team consistently following the same parenting and discipline styles. Are the parents' authoritarian, permissive, authoritative or uninvolved? Do they want the nanny to help their child learn responsibility (help with pick-up, learn to make their bed) or to have the nanny do this for the child? How do they discipline the child? Are you comfortable with the parents' approach? A nanny should NEVER physically discipline a charge.

7. Automobile Use

Will you be driving the child to pre-school, appointments, or other activities? Who provides the car and car seats? If using nanny's vehicle (not suggested), how is mileage reimbursed? Nanny's personal use of her automobile should be compensated at the IRS standard mileage reimbursement rate per mile. This is intended to cover fuel, maintenance, depreciation and wear and tear.

8. Travel Requirements

Are you expected to travel with the family for work or vacation? If so how often, how much advance notice, and how is the work compensated?

LINK: [Tips for Traveling with a Nanny](#)

9. Communication

Watch how the parents interact with each other and with you in the interview. Ask the parents which one of them will be the nanny's primary point of contact? Do they require a Nanny Log? Will they provide you detailed instruction of what is to be done and how, or provide you goals and allow you latitude on how you accomplish them? Which style do YOU prefer? Would you feel comfortable addressing a difficult subject with the parents?

10. Family Plans

Will your charge be going to preschool? When? Will this change your job? How? Do they have plans to have more children? Children grow and a nanny's job is not permanent. You need this information to make an informed choice.

FINAL TIP: Insist on a written work agreement. Taking the time at the beginning of the employment relationship to define all aspects of the relationship will engage parents and nanny in a conversation about their specific requirements and expectations. Additionally, by addressing all 'issues' up front, you avoid misunderstandings, assumptions, disappointment and conflict in the future. Experts agree - a good nanny-family work agreement is an important foundation for the smooth relationship you hope to have with this family.