



Ten Tips:

Hiring the Best Nanny

1. Don't take shortcuts!

Hiring a nanny is an orderly process, and every step below is important. Don't cheat and take shortcuts. You may well live to regret not checking those references or writing up the work agreement.

2. Define your needs

Start with a clear idea of what you are looking for. Include skills and characteristics of your ideal nanny, your scheduling needs, your budget, and the duties you expect the nanny to assume. Then divide this list into "must haves" and "would like to have."

3. Choose your recruiting method

Options include retaining an experienced nanny agency (expect fees of 10 - 15% of nanny's annual salary), using online nanny services, print or online newspaper advertisement, and word of mouth. A nanny agency is a good choice for families hiring their first nanny and especially for families who do not have the time or expertise to recruit on their own. We have [tips to help you select a nanny agency](#). Expect that when recruiting on your own you will spend 60 hours on average on the process. When using the agency, this is cut in half or more.

TIP! Look for nanny and domestic staffing agencies affiliated with reputable national industry groups, including the International Nanny Association and the Association of Premier Nanny Agencies.

4. Evaluate Candidates

A nanny agency will send you the portfolios of pre-screened candidates they have for you to consider. This is an incredible time saver. In all other recruiting options, the pre-screening is the hiring family's responsibility. Online job posting services collect data in a structured format and allow you to preview and evaluate available nannies. Your answering machine or voice mail becomes your evaluation tool in the other scenarios. Make sure your automated greeting asks the necessary initial questions. For example, "Our nanny position is a full-time, permanent live-out job, Monday - Friday 7:30 AM - 6 PM. We have two children, aged 5 and 2. To be considered, please leave your name, telephone number with area code, the best times to call you back, the date you are available, and your salary expectations."

5. Initial telephone interview/pre-screening

Keep to the high points in this initial telephone contact. Verify the non-negotiable aspects of the jobs with the candidate, including start date, hours needed, nanny's salary expectations, that she drives, and other "must haves" from your needs defined above. Give her a brief narrative about your household (number of children and their ages) and the particulars of your job. If the nanny candidate does not have the requisite skills or availability, close the conversation cordially and move on. Suitable candidates should be scheduled for an in-person interview.

6. In-person Interview.

Some people do the first in-person interview in a neutral location - a casual restaurant or coffee house are common. Many experts advise that you should not bring a stranger to your home to interview before you have met them in person. This is a time of assessment. Is the candidate punctual? Can she follow directions? Is she approaching the interview with suitable gravity - neatly dressed and groomed with copies of her resume or portfolio? Can you communicate? What are your impressions? Families find that most candidates who leave a poor initial impression do not improve over time. And those that leave an initial good impression may sour over time.

Other families AND nannies advise a 'working interview' is best - one where the nanny comes and spends several hours with you and your children. You remain to supervise, chat with the nanny and get to know her better. The nanny also has the opportunity to become familiar with your children, your home, and your expectations. Often, this is a third interview, after the telephone screening, and the initial in-person interview.

7. Check references.

You will want to be sure that the references understand that you are considering hiring this individual to provide childcare in your home unsupervised. You will find that references are more forthcoming when they understand the enormity of decision you are making. Never accept family members as the candidate's references. Never hire a candidate with no references. This is a huge red flag!

8. Write up a work agreement and extend a conditional offer of employment.

This gives you the opportunity to discuss the specifics of the job, responsibilities, compensation and benefits with the candidate. Be very specific about paid time off, any weekly guaranteed compensation, the hourly rate and overtime rates. Help the candidate [calculate her taxes and take home pay](#). *Don't forget a confidentiality clause in the agreement.* You should be as specific as possible and reach an agreement on all terms before proceeding to the next step.

9. Background checks

You will need to obtain the nanny's signed consent to order a pre-employment background check. You will need her name, date of birth, Social Security Number, any aliases or AKAs, and the chronology of her residences for the last 7 years. At a minimum you should check for criminal records in all jurisdictions she has lived in the last 7 years, check the state's sex offender registry, and check her driving record if she is licensed. If using a nanny agency, you should expect this as part of your fee. Ask to see the actual report, and make sure all items were checked. Families recruiting without an agency may [order background investigations via NannyVerify.com](#).

10. Orientation.

This is the time you spend with the nanny orienting her to your household, your children, and the logistics of the job. This can be from several hours to several days. This gives you the opportunity to observe the nanny's interaction with your children, help her learn where things are and how they are kept, go over your expectations again, and familiarize the nanny with the schedule. This is the time the nanny should receive important documentation, including [Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment](#), an Emergency Contacts List, the codes to the alarms and all house keys, and your family's emergency plan. Show her how all appliances work, including the dishwasher, washer/dryer, and vacuum.