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Nannies 101

Frequently Asked Questions



The information below was provided by various nanny consultants and experts.

1. How much should I pay my nanny?

Nanny salaries range widely. There are some nannies who make \$500 per week, and some who make \$1,200 per week. A lot depends on the hours the nanny works, her experience and education (but not always!). I advise paying a nanny a minimum of \$15 per hour, for one child. That translates to approximately \$600-800 per week, depending upon the hours. If you have more than one child, this amount increases by a few dollars per hour, closer to \$18-\$20 per hour. This amount should be what your nanny nets after taxes are taken out, so ensure to gross up. (P.S. Twins go for \$18-20 per hour!)

It is also customary in New York to pay for a monthly unlimited Metrocard, on top of this amount. This should run you a little over \$100/month.

Also, please ensure you comply with the [New York State Domestic Workers' Rights Law](#) regarding the number of days in a row a nanny can work (maximum 6) and put a policy on overtime pay in place.

2. Do I pay more for more than one child?

Yes, please see above. In your interview process, you may meet nannies who are making \$18-20 per hour, if they've been with a family for many years and have received annual raises as well as raises for additional children. Some nannies are willing to start at a lower rate with a new family, and some are not.

3. Do I pay hourly or weekly?

It is customary to pay hourly for a part-time nanny, and weekly for a full-time nanny. A written work agreement with your nanny should spell out how many hours per week that weekly salary will cover, and when overtime begins.

Again, ensure you set a policy on overtime pay. A regular weekday nanny oftentimes expects to be compensated at a higher rate when she works evenings and/or weekends. (A few extra dollars an hour.)

4. How about over-time? Sick days?

According to the New York State Domestic Workers Rights Law, overtime should start at 40 hours per week. That means, every hour above this should be paid at time and a half. Setting a policy on overtime shows that you are valuing your nanny's time outside of her regular working hours at a higher rate. Reference to pay on evenings and weekends should be include in this policy.

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Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*



I recommend giving your (full-time) nanny up to 5 sick and/or personal days each year, and paying her for the days she does not use. Scale this back proportionately for part-time nannies. It is important to disincentivize your nanny from coming to work if she is truly sick.

5. How much vacation is typical and is it paid vacation?

I advise giving two weeks' paid vacation each year—one of the nanny's choosing, and one of the family's choosing. Some families specify that vacation days must be taken when the family takes vacation. This is a term you can discuss with your nanny.

If you are taking additional vacation, on top of this two weeks, you still need to pay your nanny, whether or not she is working.

6. Do I give my nanny a raise each year? If so, how much?

Yes. Annual raises are expected. Typically a few dollars an hour, or \$50 - 100/week increases are common, depending upon the total number of hours per week she works.

7. Do I give my nanny a holiday bonus, if so how much?

Holiday bonuses range from 1-2 week's salary, to much higher than that. A cash or monetary bonus is most appreciated by all. (As opposed to a purse or tin of caramel popcorn!)

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Nanny Contracts

by Dr. Gina Lamb-Amato, MD



Finding and employing the right nanny for your baby is a complicated process, which requires a lot of time and research. This question is about a contract between you and your nanny. However I will preface my answer to say that it is absolutely imperative your check out your nanny's references and background prior to hiring her.

Your nanny will be caring for your baby who you love and cherish beyond words and you want to make sure this person has excellent and verifiable references and all the requisite documentation needed to certify she is someone who you can trust to care for your baby. That being said once you decided you are going to hire your nanny I strongly advise you have a contract between you and your nanny. While a contract is not legally required it does outline the requirements and responsibilities for both you and your nanny in a way that is clear and in writing that protects you and your nanny. The contract should also require documentation of the nanny's legal name and address and contact information so she can be legally held responsible if any problems arise.

Also if there are ever any questions about what you and your nanny have agreed upon you can refer to your contract/agreement. This is especially helpful when problems arise or questions about either parties responsibilities. The contract/agreement protects your baby, you and the nanny.

As a pediatrician I have along with pediatric experts in childcare seen cases where babies have been injured and there is a question of how the injury occurred. The parents have no written agreement or contract between the nanny and themselves where they have no documentation of even where the nanny lives or even her legal name or whether she is in this country legally. Then the nanny abruptly leaves and there is no trace of where she has gone and the parents are held responsible for injuries that were most probably sustained under the nanny's care because there was no way to question or detain the nanny. Although most parents and nannies do not have this extreme type of problem, it is important for you to understand how important a contract/agreement legally drawn up by an attorney is.

A verbal agreement will not protect you if problems arise. Your baby is precious and most important before your home, your car, etc. I cannot emphasize that the person caring for your baby should be thoroughly researched, vetted and be legally bound by law to care for your most precious jewel, your baby. That is why I recommend to all parents to have a baby video camera in your home and to pay your nanny legally and not under the table as so many parents do. Also your nanny should be in this country legally with a green card or US passport.

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Nanny Contracts, *continued*

by Dr. Gina Lamb-Amato, MD



Your nanny contract should cover the following:

1. Legal Name of Your Nanny verified with legal identification such as US passport or green card or driver's license. (Make a copy of nanny's ID.)
2. Nanny social security number with documentation with her social security card. (Make a copy for your records of nanny's social security card.)
3. Nanny's legal address documented by a utility bill, etc....
4. Nanny's Medical form and clearance signed by a physician stating she is healthy and fit to work as a nanny.
5. Nanny's PPD (Screens for Tuberculosis) test and documentation by a healthcare provider that PPD is negative.
6. Nanny's immunization documentation including Tetanus, Hepatitis B vaccine, Hepatitis A vaccine, Meningococcal vaccine, Influenza vaccine, Measles, Mumps and Rubella vaccine, Polio vaccine, Varicella vaccine, Documentation with blood titers of Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis A and Varicella documenting immunity can also be used in lieu of immunization record.
7. Nanny's Driver's license if she is going to be driving your baby.

And the following...

Nanny's Wages and Benefits

1. Salary or hourly rate.
2. Taxes deducted. Describe how taxes will be managed. You the employer will deduct all taxes from the nanny's wages and make tax payments to the IRS for example. You can refer to your attorney or the IRS website for tax management suggestions.
3. Social Security deducted,
4. Health Benefits if applicable.
5. Paid Vacation. How many weeks per year. Also how many weeks notice of vacation requests?
6. Sick leave and Personal days. Number of sick days and number of personal days. Specify how many days notice nanny will give for personal days off. For sick days specify before what time nanny should call by in the morning when she is ill.
7. Pay schedule and how often paid.
8. Paid Holidays. Specify which holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.
9. Overtime and what she will be paid for that overtime.
10. Whether nanny will be paid if you and your family go on a vacation and she is not working for you.

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Nanny Contracts, *continued*

by Dr. Gina Lamb-Amato, MD



11. Room and board if applicable. If so specify benefits such as nanny's own telephone line, food allowance per week, etc...
12. Miscellaneous: Memberships where families have membership such as health clubs, museums, etc.

Nanny's Schedule

1. Specify work hours and days.
2. Overtime and evening work.
3. Weekend work.

Training and Certifications Required

1. CPR trained and certified.
2. First Aid training and certification.
3. Baby and child development classes you may require.

Nanny's Responsibilities: Be very specific.

1. Feeding baby and baby's feeding schedule. Specify what and when she should feed baby.
2. Bathing and cleaning baby. How often, what products used and what safety measures you require for baby's bath time.
3. Baby's naptime. Describe baby's naptime routine i.e. what is done before putting baby down for example bath or reading stories, etc. Specify nap times and how many naps and how long. Describe what nanny should do if baby does not sleep.
4. Play-dates. Taking baby to play-dates and playgroups. Describe who and what and when these events take place.
5. Baby classes. Describe when baby has gymnastics class for example and how often and what is the transportation taken to these events.
6. Park. Detail and describe how often baby should be taken to the park and what nanny should be doing in the park with baby. Insist on no cell phone use when out with baby and that nanny's attention should be on your baby and your baby's safety and wellbeing.
7. Other outings such as library storytime, museum visits, etc...
8. Keeping baby's room and play area clean. Cleaning baby's laundry. Cleaning baby's toys and equipment.
9. Dressing baby. How do you want baby dressed.

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Nanny Contracts, *continued*

by Dr. Gina Lamb-Amato, MD



10. Diapering baby. I recommend nannies wear gloves when changing babies and putting on diaper ointments or creams. Specify if you want nanny to wash her hands before and after diapering baby.
11. Food preparation. Describe how you want baby's expressed Breast milk or formula prepared before feeding. If baby is eating baby food how do you want food prepared and how much should be given to baby? Also describe any table foods such as fruits, crackers, etc that you allow baby to have.
12. What lotions and creams and other personal care products you want to be used for baby.
13. Screen time. If baby is 2 years or younger there is to be no screen (television, iPad, phones, videos, etc) use when nanny is caring for baby.
14. Cell phone use. Specify there is to be no cell phone use when nanny is supervising and caring for baby except at what times you specify.
15. Specify what play you want nanny to engage with nanny everyday. For example you should specify how often and how long you want baby to do tummy time.

Parent Values and Beliefs About Child Development and Care

1. Specify your ideas and beliefs about you are raising your baby and how you want the nanny to incorporate them in her care. For example if your baby is crying and having problems sleeping and taking a nap specify what you want nanny to do and what you do not want her to do. For example you probably do not want the nanny to let baby "cry it out" if baby is not going to sleep. Describe your beliefs and philosophy about sleep, nutrition, safety, play, etc...
2. You may want your nanny to do reading or training on child development and infant care. Specify if you require this.

Emergency

1. What to do in an emergency. For example when to call 911.
2. Who should be called?
3. Mother's telephone number.
4. Father's telephone number.
5. Grandparent or other family member or friend number.

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Nanny Contracts, *continued*

by Dr. Gina Lamb-Amato, MD



Safety

1. Require nanny understand safety is of utmost importance.
2. Safety equipment in your home for childproofing home.
3. Who nanny should call if something is not working at your home.
4. Food safety measures you want such as how do you want baby's milk prepared.
5. Bath and water safety.
6. Car seat use when in a car or taxi.
7. Who is allowed to visit and take baby when parents are not home? For example you want to write in the contract the names of grandparents or other relatives that parents allow to visit and take baby.
8. What visitor does the nanny if any while caring for your baby allow.

Baby's Health

1. What should nanny do if baby should become sick? When should nanny call you for baby's illness?
2. Name of pediatrician and other healthcare providers.
3. Copy of baby's health insurance card in case of emergency.
4. Specify if nanny will be taking baby to pediatric visits or to any other healthcare provider.
5. CPR and First Aid training and certification and how often needed updating.

Transportation

1. Use of car to transport baby.
2. Use of subway or bus to transport baby.
3. Use of taxi's to transport baby and requiring nanny carry and use car seat when using taxis.

Nanny Reviews

1. Probation period and how long.
2. How often nanny's performance review.
3. How will nanny's concerns be addressed?

This is just a sample of what can be written in the contract. It's best to have an attorney review contract before you and your nanny sign. Remember your baby is your most precious gift. Insist that the person caring for your baby know and understand and care for your baby the way you do.

Nannies 101

Communicating with Your Nanny

by Lisa Diker



Congratulations! Your nanny search has come to a successful end and you just hired your “perfect for you” new nanny. Everyone is very excited and you are totally optimistic that she’s going to work out great—the kids are going to love her, she’s going to rock this job, and you’re going to be able to head to work blissfully worry free....

But here you are, not a week later, hovering just outside the front door with a gob of anxiety eating at your insides, wondering how on earth you’re going to actually leave this woman in charge???. Your thoughts are a jumble: “How did this go south so quick? Can she really be so totally useless? She seemed amazing – she aced the interview, she had excellent references, great work experience, and she totally won over my kids in her first in-home visit (surely no easy feat)... so why do I feel like this is all a terrible, horrible, very bad mistake?”

Hmmm... looks like you and your nanny have a geography problem.

“Geography?!? What does geography have to do with my nanny issues??” you ask. Well, I think it has EVERYTHING to do with it.

Allow me to explain. Imagine for a moment that you’ve lived your whole life in the same small town (or big city – your choice). You are totally “local” – you speak the lingo and know all the great places to eat and shop – and you happily go about your business completely in sync with the people around you. Ok, now imagine that this morning you woke up to find yourself transported to a completely new town. You have no clue what to do or where to go – and you can’t even ask for help because you can’t make out what people are saying. Even the simplest tasks seem impossible. Everyone else is bustling about, not really concerned with your predicament – people here have lives to lead, jobs to do! And whenever you attempt to muddle through or you appear confused, you’re met with exasperated sighs and irritated glares. Imagine how you might feel about this new place and the people in it...

A nanny starting with a new family might feel very much like she has just arrived in a new “town”. Suddenly she is working, and oftentimes living, in a new home with a family that she knows very little about. She doesn’t know the ins and outs, the routines or the family dynamic – simply put, she doesn’t know how to speak the “language”. And yet she is often expected to just pick up and start handling the children, the routine, and the chores as if she’s been doing it all along.

A new nanny may come from any number of backgrounds or experiences – she may be a local student working towards a career in childcare, or she may be a foreign worker recently arrived from another country. Wherever it was that she came from, the destination is the same – a new job working in a new home, caring for new kids. And with her she brings her own unique set of

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Communicating with Your Nanny, *continued*

by Lisa Diker



expectations already shaped by her own family, her culture and her previous work experience. She comes to you speaking her own “language”.

As a new employer, the most important thing that you can do to ensure an easy transition is to act as a family interpreter – you need to teach your new nanny the “language” of your home.

Try to reserve at least a few days to be her exclusive “tour guide”. On her very first day, take her on a detailed tour of your home. Show her where everything is and familiarize her with her new surroundings. Describe in detail a typical day with your kids and be very specific about what role you expect her to play: Does she dress the children? Prepare meals? Who packs lunches? Is she responsible to take the children to and from school or do you do it? What about housework? Communicating these details clearly will ensure that she understands what you expect of her.

Provide your nanny with a written “guidebook” containing summaries of your family’s schedule, routines, and preferences. Make sure she has appropriate contact information. Does she know what to do in an emergency? Does she have allergy information? Jot down where she can find favorite snacks or treasured loveys in the event of a potential meltdown. Give her a neighborhood map and a list of age-appropriate activities that she can take the children to during the day. Leave a list of play-date contacts. Any information that you can provide to help her adjust to life in your “town” will go a long way towards making her feel more capable in her new job.

In the meantime, be patient. And if you do discover that your nanny is doing something that you don’t like – don’t come out swinging. Your ultimate goal is to create harmony, and approaching the missteps that will inevitably happen by attacking her will only put her on the defensive. If you need to vent about something she did, then vent to your partner, your best friend or your shrink – don’t vent to your nanny. Approach the issue privately and calmly. Explain the problem and work together to find a solution. Your nanny is going to be in charge of the health, safety and wellbeing of your children, so it’s in everyone’s best interest to facilitate mutually respectful dialogue.

It’s going to take time, patience, and more than a little bit of effort – but eventually your nanny will be a fully integrated citizen of your “town”. And taking the time to be a helpful “interpreter” throughout the transition period will be the key ingredient to ensuring a happy and healthy relationship with your new nanny.

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Sharing Holidays with Your Nanny

by Lisa Diker



I am often asked about proper holiday season “nanny etiquette”... Do we give her a gift? What do we give? Should we include her in our family’s holiday celebrations? What if we want our privacy? What if we celebrate different holidays?

Let’s start with the gift... It’s customary to give a gift around the holidays to acknowledge your nanny and your appreciation of her service throughout the year. An informal poll of my “nannyhood” friends showed that most families give a cash bonus for a holiday gift. The amount of the bonus ranges substantially but the average is one to two weeks wages, prorated for nannies who worked less than a full year. However, as one friend delicately pointed out, the recent economic downturn has put a squeeze on many families’ holiday budgets making it very difficult to give such a generous cash gift. Whether paying a bonus is not financially feasible or whether you simply prefer to give a gift more personal than cash, there are many other wonderful ways to recognize your nanny’s contribution. Taking the time to think about your nanny’s likes or hobbies will help you find the perfect gift. For example, would she enjoy a few extra days of paid time off to rest or spend with her family? How about a new book, a trip to the movies, or some pampering at the nail salon? Consider giving a gift certificate redeemable for something special that you know she would appreciate, or even buying a gift card to her favorite store or restaurant to spend as she likes.

While a gift from you will show your nanny that you value and appreciate her, it is also important to encourage your kids to acknowledge their nanny with their own personal gift. Engage your children in the process by talking to them about their nanny and wondering aloud what it is that they could do to say “thank you”. I guarantee that your kids will jump at the opportunity to create a special painting, picture, or craft and they will be super proud to present it to her. If your child is too young to make something, then consider giving your nanny a framed photo of her with your child. Your nanny will undoubtedly be touched to receive a personal and meaningful gift from your children, and this may in turn strengthen the bond between them.

The murkier issues are whether and how to involve your nanny in your family’s holiday celebrations. There is no “one size fits all” answer. For some “nanny families”, the open and personal nature of their relationship with their nanny makes holiday planning seamless. Others, especially those whose traditions differ from their nanny’s, may find it difficult to broach the topic. Our family is Jewish and our nanny is Catholic. Rather than discourage our kids’ curiosity about our nanny’s Christmas traditions, we have encouraged them to talk and ask questions. Our nanny’s stories of Christmas celebrations in her home country have been met with enthusiasm and our kids have gained from learning about her culture and faith. We’ve certainly had to answer some “tough” questions (i.e. “Mom... will Santa only bring presents down the chimney for our nanny? If we don’t have a Christmas tree, where will he put everything?”), but overall it’s been positive. Acknowledging each other’s faith also gave us the opportunity to talk openly about our upcoming celebrations and plan in advance. Last year, we adjusted our

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Sharing Holidays with Your Nanny, *continued*

by Lisa Diker



nanny's work schedule to accommodate her choice to spend Christmas with her friends and at her church. Our family gave her a Christmas gift, and she gave the children gifts for Hanukkah. As well, she has always been welcome to participate in our family's Jewish holiday celebrations. Our kids thrill at introducing her to traditional Jewish foods (Matzo balls= good; Gefilte fish= bad.) and teaching her about their own holiday traditions.

If you prefer that your nanny not be present during your family's holiday celebrations, the best way to prevent misunderstandings or bruised feelings is to talk about your expectations with her in advance. Take a moment to sit down together privately, away from the children. In a kind way, explain that the holidays are usually a private time for your family to spend together and that you want to discuss how you can celebrate the holidays in a way that is comfortable for everyone. If there are differences in faith or observance, you and she should identify and discuss what are acceptable traditions to share (i.e. Can she give gifts to the kids? Can she decorate her room?). Create a holiday schedule that clearly shows when she will and won't be working. Give your nanny ample opportunity to make her holiday plans, and offer to help her make arrangements if needed. Consider giving her additional paid days off, like Christmas Eve, so you can maintain your family's privacy while still making sure your nanny doesn't lose any wages. You may also want to encourage her and the kids to plan their own "holiday party" where they can enjoy some special time together and exchange gifts. Decisions should be made with your nanny's input and consent so that everyone feels at ease with the "holiday plan".

Holidays are an important time for both your family and your nanny. Taking the time to think ahead, discuss, and plan properly will help to make sure that your nanny feels appreciated rather than taken for granted or left out. Gifts are an important way of acknowledging your nanny over the holidays, but more important is the effort and respect you show in ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to freely and comfortably celebrate the holiday season.

Nannies 101

Helpful Interview Tips



Finding Your Nanny

Start the search for your nanny about 4 to 6 weeks prior to your intended start date. You need to leave enough time to find your match and to also have her potentially work for you on a trial basis.

Phone Interview First

It takes a lot of effort and scheduling to interview nannies in person, so you can save yourself a lot of time by having a brief interview on the phone with a nanny first to see if she is a potential fit. Can she work the hours you want her to work? Are you on the same page with salary? Make it a point to listen to her voice – can you understand her? Is she pleasant to speak with? How are her manners? Tell her that you plan to do a background check on her and make sure she is OK with that. After you speak with her for a bit, make a decision if she is worthy of an in person interview. Listen to your instincts. If you do not like her on the phone, most likely you will not like her in person.

In Person Interview

If possible, try to have your partner at home with you for the interview. It is always nice to have a second opinion. Also, try to schedule the interview at a time when the baby is awake. This is a good way to see how a nanny interacts with your child and how your child responds to the nanny. Open communication is key to having a successful relationship with your nanny. Be sure to be very specific with your job requirements. For example, do you want a nanny who cleans? cooks? can stay late? can take vacations with you? can also babysit in the evening? etc. etc. Make sure you have a detailed list of everything you are looking for in a nanny. Remember to also encourage the nanny to ask you any questions she may have. Communication is a two way street and you don't want surprises on either end.

Interview Questions

Have the nanny review her past nanny positions. (age of children, length of time, job duties, etc.)

Why did her last job end?

What are the hours she is willing to work? Is she flexible with time? Can she come early or stay late?

What kind of housekeeping is she comfortable with?

Does she cook? food shop? run errands?

How does she feel about taking classes and making playdates?

Has she ever had to deal with an emergency? If so, how did she handle it?

If she is a parent, does she have back up coverage in case her child is home sick?

Nannies 101

Helpful Interview Tips, *continued*



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- What does she see herself doing when the baby is napping?
 - What kind of activities does she do with a child your child's age?
 - What is her discipline style?
 - Does she have any tricks for getting children to eat their meals?
 - Does she have a special way of putting babies to sleep?
 - Does she have any health related problems that may prevent her from doing her job?
 - What does she consider her most important responsibility as a nanny?
 - How long does she see staying at the job?
 - Is there anything that she refuses to do?
 - What are her hobbies?
 - What is her strongest asset as a nanny? What does she feel she can improve?
 - Is she CPR certified? If not, would she be willing to take a class?

Questions for the Nanny's Reference

- How did she find the nanny?
- For how long did she employ the nanny?
- How old were the children that the nanny cared for?
- Why isn't she using the nanny anymore?
- Would she hire the nanny again?
- If she could change two things about the nanny, what would they be?
- Is she still in touch with the nanny?

* You should sit down and think what is really important to you in a nanny. If you really want a nanny who takes your child to the park everyday, then find out if the nanny did that with her former employer's children. If you really want a nanny who cooks, then ask the former employer if she cooked for her. So basically you should decide what you are looking for in a nanny and formulate your questions accordingly.

Nannies 101

Nanny and Baby Relationship

by Dr. Gina Lamb-Amato MD



How do I know if my nanny and babysitter and baby have a good relationship?

Having a nanny can be wonderful when you and your baby have a warm and trusting relationship with your nanny. All mother's who have a nanny are always concerned that their nanny and baby have an excellent relationship. There are signs and clues to knowing the quality of your baby's relationship with her nanny.

1. Your baby should feel comfortable with your nanny. There should be warmth and trust between your nanny and baby. Baby should be relaxed and happy to be with your nanny. If baby is fearful or anxious around your nanny you should be concerned.
2. Your nanny communicates what she and your baby do each day in a daily report. She discusses what activities and play they did, what baby ate and how baby slept. Also she lets you know how baby is feeling and what made her happy during the day and what upset baby.
3. Baby is excited and overjoyed to see your nanny each day. Once your baby knows your nanny and has spent time with her, your baby should be happy when she sees your nanny. If your nanny enjoys being with your baby your baby will feel her care and genuine interest.
4. Your nanny do many different play activities that they clearly enjoy through out the day. Your nanny has different age appropriate play activities for your baby which they share. Your nanny also reads to baby, tells her stories and sings to baby. Later when your baby is with you your baby may sing or show new play skills or want to play new baby games.
5. When you come home baby is clean and her room and play and feeding areas are clean and neat. Your baby being clean and dressed shows a nanny who pays attention to her making sure she is cleaned when she spills food on herself or makes a mess. Also your baby is well fed and not hungry as if she has not eaten for a while when you arrive. Also your baby should have a clean diaper and not need changing as soon as you arrive home. This shows a nanny who is attentive and caring of your baby.
6. Baby is well rested and not tired and exhausted. This shows your nanny makes sure baby naps and doesn't ignore nap times.
7. Baby appears to trust and feel safe with your nanny. Babies instinctively know who cares for them, who they can trust and feel safe. If your baby has sudden behavioral or emotional changes like waking up at night crying and screaming despite nothing being wrong for example you should investigate what's going on during the daytime.

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Nanny and Baby Relationship, *continued*

by Dr. Gina Lamb-Amato MD



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8. Your nanny has some knowledge and understanding of infant development and does appropriate baby stimulation and activities with your baby. She lets you know when your baby has reached new developmental milestones and shares this with you. Your nanny also finds ways to make activities fun and playful.
 9. Trust your own intuition about your nanny. You are usually right about whatever you are feeling.
 10. Get a baby video camera and record nanny and baby during the day. This way you will know what is happening when you are not around and know the quality of your nanny and baby's relationship.

Nannies 101

Creating a Nanny Relationship that Lasts

by Laura Maggied, The Help Company



For most parents, finding a nanny you love is the most critical part of your search. Whether you found the right agency to help you, or you spent months going through hundreds of resumes on your own, the good news is you found her. But once you find her, how do you keep her? Everyone you meet might want to steal your nanny. What will separate you from the herd?

Most people understand that a happy employee equals a happy workplace, but lines can blur when you have someone working in your home. In an article entitled “Keep your friends close, but the nanny closer” Beverley Turner says “ I was known to stand in the kitchen discussing overtime hours while bleaching my moustache.” We know how you feel. Your nanny sees you at your best and your worst, and sometimes it can be hard to maintain boundaries.

The Help Company has worked placing nannies with families for 30 years. Here are some tips we use to create a relationship that will last.

1. Construct a contract. We assist our clients in drafting a contract before their nanny begins working with them. This can include daily duties, weekly schedule, salary, overtime, vacation days, sick days, paid holidays, and benefits. It’s also helpful to include household rules and policies that your family abides by. Most likely this contract will not cover every question, so be sure to go over this face to face. If there are things that need to be changed/added down the road, have a discussion and ask for feedback.
2. Speaking of benefits, offer them! While realizing everyone has a budget, there are cost effective ways to offer benefits. You can begin this conversation by asking your nanny what they expect. Offering health insurance can be an important benefit. In addition, making sure that your nanny has paid vacation, sick days, and holidays, helps her to feel like a valued professional. Think of the way a corporation structures their employee benefit package. Vacation and holidays support a healthy balance between work and personal life. Taking a break is good for everyone.
3. Hold frequent reviews. (Quarterly) This can include salary changes, job performance, areas for improvement, and a bonus system. You can also evaluate your nanny on her childcare performance. Talk to your nanny and let her know if you think she is providing enough activities for your child, adequate social interactions, and properly handling discipline situations.
4. Provide job perks. The little things count. Offering your nanny transportation money, treating her to a manicure, gym membership, entertainment tickets, or even a small gift card goes a long way. Small gestures show how much you appreciate the work she does.

Nannies 101

Creating a Nanny Relationship that Lasts, *continued*

by Laura Maggied, The Help Company



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5. Offer professional development. Encourage your nanny to start a playgroup with other local nannies. Offer to send her to a cooking class, or child development class. Make sure to ask her how she is enjoying it. Let her know you are interested in what she is learning.

Most of all, nannies want to feel like they are respected and appreciated by the family with whom they work. And, this relationship is a two way street! The most successful placements are with families and nannies that have open communication, and mutual respect.

Nannies 101

Bridging the Divide Between Mom & Nanny

by Lisa Diker



Congratulations! Your nanny search has come to a successful end and you just hired your “perfect for you” new nanny. Everyone is very excited and you are totally optimistic that she’s going to work out great – the kids are going to love her, she’s going to rock this job, and you’re going to be able to head to work blissfully worry free....

But here you are, not a week later, hovering just outside the front door with a gob of anxiety eating at your insides, wondering how on earth you’re going to actually leave this woman in charge???. Your thoughts are a jumble: “How did this go south so quick? Can she really be so totally useless? She seemed amazing – she aced the interview, she had excellent references, great work experience, and she totally won over my kids in her first in-home visit (surely no easy feat)... so why do I feel like this is all a terrible, horrible, very bad mistake?”

Hmmm... looks like you and your nanny have a geography problem.

“Geography?!? What does geography have to do with my nanny issues??” you ask. Well, I think it has EVERYTHING to do with it.

Allow me to explain. Imagine for a moment that you’ve lived your whole life in the same small town (or big city – your choice). You are totally “local” – you speak the lingo and know all the great places to eat and shop – and you happily go about your business completely in sync with the people around you. Ok, now imagine that this morning you woke up to find yourself transported to a completely new town. You have no clue what to do or where to go – and you can’t even ask for help because you can’t make out what people are saying. Even the simplest tasks seem impossible. Everyone else is bustling about, not really concerned with your predicament – people here have lives to lead, jobs to do! And whenever you attempt to muddle through or you appear confused, you’re met with exasperated sighs and irritated glares. Imagine how you might feel about this new place and the people in it...

A nanny starting with a new family might feel very much like she has just arrived in a new “town”. Suddenly she is working, and oftentimes living, in a new home with a family that she knows very little about. She doesn’t know the ins and outs, the routines or the family dynamic – simply put, she doesn’t know how to speak the “language”. And yet she is often expected to just pick up and start handling the children, the routine, and the chores as if she’s been doing it all along.

A new nanny may come from any number of backgrounds or experiences – she may be a local student working towards a career in childcare, or she may be a foreign worker recently arrived from another country. Wherever it was that she came from, the destination is the same – a new job working in a new home, caring for new kids. And with her she brings her own unique set of expectations already shaped by her own family, her culture and her previous work experience. She comes to you speaking her own “language”.

Nannies 101

Bridging the Divide Between Mom & Nanny, *continued*

by Lisa Diker



As a new employer, the most important thing that you can do to ensure an easy transition is to act as a family interpreter – you need to teach your new nanny the “language” of your home.

Try to reserve at least a few days to be her exclusive “tour guide”. On her very first day, take her on a detailed tour of your home. Show her where everything is and familiarize her with her new surroundings. Describe in detail a typical day with your kids and be very specific about what role you expect her to play: Does she dress the children? Prepare meals? Who packs lunches? Is she responsible to take the children to and from school or do you do it? What about housework? Communicating these details clearly will ensure that she understands what you expect of her.

Provide your nanny with a written “guidebook” containing summaries of your family’s schedule, routines, and preferences. Make sure she has appropriate contact information. Does she know what to do in an emergency? Does she have allergy information? Jot down where she can find favorite snacks or treasured loveys in the event of a potential meltdown. Give her a neighborhood map and a list of age-appropriate activities that she can take the children to during the day. Leave a list of play-date contacts. Any information that you can provide to help her adjust to life in your “town” will go a long way towards making her feel more capable in her new job.

In the meantime, be patient. And if you do discover that your nanny is doing something that you don’t like – don’t come out swinging. Your ultimate goal is to create harmony, and approaching the missteps that will inevitably happen by attacking her will only put her on the defensive. If you need to vent about something she did, then vent to your partner, your best friend or your shrink – don’t vent to your nanny. Approach the issue privately and calmly. Explain the problem and work together to find a solution. Your nanny is going to be in charge of the health, safety and wellbeing of your children, so it’s in everyone’s best interest to facilitate mutually respectful dialogue.

It’s going to take time, patience, and more than a little bit of effort – but eventually your nanny will be a fully integrated citizen of your “town”. And taking the time to be a helpful “interpreter” throughout the transition period will be the key ingredient to ensuring a happy and healthy relationship with your new nanny.

Nannies 101

Frequently Asked Babysitter Questions



The information below was provided by various nanny consultants and experts.

1. What are some key questions to ask potential babysitters?

Although babysitters are part-time or temporary in their commitment, it is important to invest the same amount of time interviewing potential candidates. Do not just hire a sitter because a friend of yours likes her! Each family's needs are different.

Here are a few key questions to ask:

1. Please tell me about your previous experience?
2. What ages are you most comfortable caring for?
3. What sort of time commitment can you make? Babysitters are generally part-time and or temporary in nature. You should ensure your needs match with those of your sitter. I refer to time in terms of how many hours each day your sitter is available, as well as how long she'd be willing to commit to your family.

And, more qualitative questions, such as:

1. Tell me how you'd resolve a conflict between my children? A sitter may have a different approach, but if it is important to you to continue your policies on discipline and behavior, make sure you are on the same page.
2. How would you manage an emergency situation? How have you had to in the past?
3. If you are expecting any other help around the home, aside from someone to watch your children, stimulate them and keep them most importantly safe, you should certainly ensure the sitter is comfortable taking on this role.
4. Did you have a sitter growing up? If so, what was your experience like?
5. And, of course, why do you want to babysit?

Nannies 101

Frequently Asked Babysitter Questions, *continued*



2. What about Infant/Child CPR training?

Infant/Child CPR/First Aid certification is good for only two years after one takes the class. If your sitter has not taken the class, and you want her to be trained to respond in such an emergency, you should pay to send her to one. Try the [American Red Cross](#), as they hold regular classes. They, and other groups, also hold a shorter class on basics specifically for babysitters.

3. What do I ask her references?

I would focus on what is most important to you, of course. If reliability and punctuality is important, ask about that. I would want to ask about the sitter's demeanor with the children. Was she patient? Was she comfortable enforcing behavioral standards or was she a pushover? Always ask for specific examples that demonstrate this.

4. What is the average pay per hour for a babysitter?

Babysitter and nanny rates vary widely. In New York City, you can expect to pay a young, inexperienced Mother's Helper (i.e. someone who will be there while you are home too) in the \$8-10 per hour range. For a high-school student, approximately \$10-12/hr, and for a college-aged or older nanny, \$14-15/hour. This rate increases with the number of children the sitter is responsible for watching, of course.

Also, for weekend sitters, who work as full-time nannies during the week, rates are higher—closer to \$17-20 per hour.

If you are in another town or region, certainly ask your neighbors or local parents what they pay.

6. What do you do if you come home much later than you expected?

I advise giving your sitter notice if you anticipate being home any later than expected. As sitters are part-time, it is not necessarily their primary means of income and they may have other commitments. Again, make sure your sitter has the flexibility you need.

7. Do you need to pay for a cab/transportation home? After what time is this expected?

I advise sending your sitter home in a cab if you are home later than 9pm. This is a judgment call that you should make. Also, a little known detail that is much appreciated by sitters taking a taxi home is for you to provide them with small bills with which to pay for the cab. (in case the cabbie does not have change) If your sitter lives in the neighborhood, either you or your spouse/partner should walk her home if it is very late, and ensure she gets in the door safely.

Nannies 101

Frequently Asked Babysitter Questions, *continued*



8. What are some signs that this babysitter is not a good fit for your child?

If your child is persistently complaining to you about your sitter, you should listen closely and get an understanding of exactly why this is. It may be a personality fit, which might be reason to change sitters. Your child may want someone more active, more maternal. It may be that your child just doesn't want you to go out, and would be unhappy with anyone who stepped into your place.

I think a more common issue is the overall family fit. If you do not see eye-to-eye on discipline, or the sitter is not as flexible as you need her to be, you may wish to consider other candidates.

I do love the idea of hiring someone local! Especially for evenings out, there's not as much pressure to return early to accommodate your sitter's commute.

Sharon is happy to speak with you about your specific questions on the "babysitter market". You can reach her at info@brownstonenannies.com or (646) 729-3634.