

7 TIPS FOR HIRING A BABYSITTER OR NANNY

1. WRITE OUT A JOB DESCRIPTION.

This can be as simple as listing out the times and days you will need the sitter, the sitter's preferred amount of experience with children, whether you want your sitter to have reliable transportation, etc. It is important to do this before you start looking for a sitter.

2. ASK FRIENDS AND FAMILY FOR RECOMMENDATIONS.

The next best thing to hiring someone you know is hiring someone who a friend or family member trusts. Just because someone else recommends them to you, though, doesn't mean you should skip over the next steps. You still need to make sure the person will be a good fit with your family.

3. USE A REPUTABLE CHILD CARE FINDING SERVICE.

If you aren't successful finding someone through friends and family you should turn to services that specialize in this area, like care.com or sittercity.com. Also, you might be able to find Facebook Groups in your community that exist for this reason alone!

4. MEET FACE-TO-FACE WITH FINAL APPLICANTS.

You can tell so much about a person when you actually meet them. Non-verbal cues are very important - is the applicant really listening to you, is she off in la la land, is she checking her watch, is she interacting with your child(ren) in a way that you would want your nanny to? It might work best to meet a few applicants in person at a coffee shop or other public place to relieve some added pressure for both of you. Or, you might want them in your home to see them in your environment and interacting with your children. Also, you can learn a lot about someone just by what they wear to an interview.

5. ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS IN INTERVIEWS.

And pay attention to the answers. You of course want to discuss the job description, responsibilities, pay, and so on. But here are some of my favorite interview questions:

- Tell me about the families and children you've worked with in the past. What did your responsibilities include?
- Have you worked with a child (or children) the age of my mine?
- Tell me about a time when a child didn't follow your instructions. How did you handle that?
- Tell me about a time when a family asked you to do something that you didn't necessarily agree with (for example, let the child cry it out or discipline techniques). How did you handle it?
- Have you ever been accused of abuse or acting inappropriately with a child?
- Is there anything that I should know about you?
- Any job-specific questions (Are you willing to do laundry? Tidy up the house? Etc...)

6. CALL REFERENCES – DON'T JUST ACCEPT WRITTEN REFERENCES.

Ask the sitter if she can provide you with three or four references that can speak to his or her experience around children. Be sure to call and speak with at least two of them. I wouldn't rely on a written reference alone because anyone can forge a document. Questions that I asked references for my nannies:

- Tell me about how you know her.
- What ages of children did she work with in your home?
- What are her weaknesses? (Be persistent. *Well, is there anything she can improve upon?*) Can you deal with any reported weaknesses? One of the references I called for a nanny who worked for me years ago gave a glowing reference, but did acknowledge she was a bit messy and didn't pick up after herself sometimes. Guess what? That drove me crazy for the year she worked with us!

- My child(ren) is/ are ____ months/years old. Do you have any concerns about her working around these ages of children?
- Is there anything you think I should know about her before making a decision to hire her?
- Would you be comfortable hiring her again?

7. RUN A BACKGROUND CHECK ON FINAL APPLICANT.

This person will be around your child and you want to be sure you are meeting best practices. If you use a service like care.com, then they can do this for you for an extra fee. If not, then you can find a background check provider online to run your search. If it's so cheap that it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. I suggest running a comprehensive search in your state as well as a multi-state background check, a motor vehicle records search (if the sitter will be driving your child), sex offender registry search, and check the child abuse registry in your state. If the potential sitter has lived out-of-state recently I would also be sure to run checks that meet minimum standards for his or her previous locations. Legally, you will need to obtain written consent from your sitter before running these checks.

