



Au Pair in America

Interviewing Au Pairs: Quick Guide

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A thorough review of the au pair's application will provide you with the groundwork to make the right choice. Over the years host families have shared their top interviewing tips and we wanted to share them with you! To review our complete selections guide, please refer to the "Selections – A Three Step Guide to Matching" on your host family resource site.

Getting started

It is very important to give the au pair a clear picture of what life will be like with your family.

Plan a "family portrait" before you make the call, as language difficulties and the excitement of the moment often erase all memory of what you want to say.

Interviewing Tips:

- Set up a time so the au pair is prepared for your call
- Prepare your questions in advance
- Speak slowly and use simple words if your au pair is a non English speaker
- Ask open ended questions that encourage conversation, rather than simple "yes-no" responses

Tip:

Ask one question at a time, rather than asking a compound question.

The Interview Questions

Asking about child care experience

The most important thing your au pair will do is care for your children. So ask a lot of questions. Here are some ideas:

- What is the longest amount of time that you have taken care of children by yourself?
- Do you prefer to take care of children of a certain age? Gender? Why?
- What would you do to fill time with the children?
- What do you like best about caring for children?
- How have you disciplined the children you have cared for before?

- How can you make bed time fun and easy?
- How can you help a child who cries when the parent leaves for work?
- Have you ever taken care of more than one child by yourself?
- What can you do if two (or more) children want your attention at the same time?

Tip:

Ask her what is the most fun she has ever had while caring for children.

Finding out if your lifestyles and personalities are a match

Remember, you have to live together for a year. Questions about lifestyle are also important to help you make the right decision. Here are a few to help you with your list:

- Do you live at home now? If not, when was the last time that you did?
- Describe your relationship with your family? Do you get along with your brothers and sisters? What activities do you do together as a family? What is your favorite thing to do together?
- Who is responsible for things like cooking, cleaning and doing laundry in your house? How much is everyone expected to help? How much do you help?
- How do you feel about house rules?
- How do you feel about having a curfew?
- What are your hobbies, do you like sports, what does 'fun' mean to you?
- How would your best friend describe you?
- What are your favorite foods to eat? Is there anything you cannot eat? Do you follow a special diet?
- Do you have any allergies that you did not put down on your application form?
- Are you comfortable around pets?
- Do you ever smoke cigarettes ~ even socially (even if the applicant indicated non-smoker on her application)?

Tip:

Ask fun questions too! What is her favorite ice cream, music or color!



Homesickness and culture shock

None of us can predict how homesick we will be when leaving our home country for a long period of time and au pairs can't either. Talking about it always helps:

- What is the longest period of time you have spent away from your family and friends? Did you ever get sad or lonely because you were away from them?
- What does your family think about your decision to become an au pair? Do you think they will visit you while you are in the U.S.? How do you plan to keep in touch with them?
- Do you have a significant other? If so, how do they feel about your decision to become an au pair? Do you think they will visit you while you are in the U.S.? How do you plan to keep in touch with them?
- How do you think we can help you feel better if you get homesick?

Tip:

Ask her what she will miss the most from back home. You may be surprised by her answer.

Driving

Don't be shy! Ask, ask and ask again especially if you need a good driver! Don't assume anything! Go over everything in the application and get details:

- How did you learn to drive? How long have you been driving?
- How often do you drive? What kind of car do you drive? Do you have your own car?

- Have you driven a manual or an automatic? Do you fill your own gas?
- Describe what the roads are like in your country? Have you driven in the city/highway/snow?
- Have you ever parked in a garage?
- Are you nervous about driving in the United States?

Tip:

Ask her what side of the road she drives on!

Decisions, decisions! Questions for YOU!

You now have a lot of information and now it is time to choose:

- Did you "hit it off"?
- Does she have what it 'takes' to be successful with your family?
- Did you cover all the basics and then some?
- Did you get a sense of the au pair's personality? Will she 'mesh' with you and your children?
- Does she have the qualities you are looking for? (Interactive, high energy; Academic and/or interested in the arts; Flexible and willing to go with the flow)
- Would you like to speak with her again?

Tip:

Go, Go, Go with your gut!

