



Ten Tips:

## Common Nanny Hiring Mistakes

### 1. Inadequate Reference and Background Screening

Failure to speak candidly to a candidate's references about your job and their experiences with the candidate has led many a family to make a hiring mistake. This takes time, and in their hurry to staff the position, many families take, and then regret, this shortcut.

▶ [Proper Reference and Background Screening](#)

### 2. Compensation out of Step with the Local Job Market

Hiring a nanny is expensive. It is the most expensive form of US childcare. Offering below market compensation not only makes it harder to staff the position, but it also leads to frequent turnover as the nanny leaves for a better paying position. If the local market wage is outside your budget, you may consider a nanny share.

### 3. Unrealistic Expectations for Housekeeping Help

Parents often have visions of the Brady Bunch's Alice in their heads when they hire a nanny. They reason that their child naps several hours every afternoon and the nanny should be able to use this down time to take care of all the housekeeping chores. It IS realistic to expect that a nanny will leave your house in the condition you left it. Unloading the dishwasher, emptying the full kitchen trash, and cleaning up around the highchair are all realistic expectations. It IS NOT realistic to expect the nanny to spend the hour or two that your child is napping cleaning bathrooms, doing the parent's laundry, mopping floors, etc. A nanny typically works in a very isolated situation, with little adult interaction and no meaningful breaks away from work. She needs some time in her 9 or 10 hour day to sit down, have a cup of tea, phone a friend, or in some manner take a break before resuming full childcare responsibilities.

### 4. Poor Communication about Wages and Taxes.

You might believe that the nanny should expect that you will deduct taxes, and when you offer her \$850 per week, she will only clear \$725 after taxes. Wrong! Many nannies (and domestics in general) hear and understand the salary offer as a take home pay. You need to clearly communicate all compensation issues, including overtime compensation, up front when hiring. Share with her a [sample paycheck calculation](#). Address her hourly wage and overtime compensation; this is the law. Miscommunication on compensation had torpedoed many a nanny: family relationship.

### 5. Hiring Without a Written Work Agreement

**Don't do it!** A well-crafted work agreement will spell out all the terms and conditions of the employment relationship, including hours, duties, benefits, and compensation. We publish a separate [tip sheet on writing the nanny work agreement](#), and provide sample agreements at [HomeWorkSolutions.com](http://HomeWorkSolutions.com).

## 6. Disagreement on Child Care Style

The family is very permissive, the nanny believes in boundaries. The nanny believes in disciplining with time out, the family believes in taking away privileges. Talk about this up front. Ask the nanny about how she was reared. Articulate your philosophy and ask her for feedback. Inconsistency in discipline and childrearing philosophies is not good for your children, and you will not be happy with the relationship long term.

## 7. Failure to Provide Training and Orientation

The new nanny does not know exactly how your family operates. A family needs to spend adequate time - from several hours, to several days, to acclimate the new nanny. Families find that a little preparation and a few hours of orientation with the new nanny greatly improves the comfort level of both the nanny and family.

► [Recommended Reading: Orienting the New Nanny](#)

## 8. Micromanagement

This commonly occurs with families with new babies, and families hiring their first nanny. It is perfectly legitimate to articulate your expectations to the nanny, and to request that she maintain a nanny log. It is unreasonable to expect her to have your baby napping from exactly 9:00 - 9:45 and 1:00 - 2:15. Tell her what you need done, and if necessary, how you like it done, and then give her the latitude and flexibility to order her day to accomplish what you expect.

## 9. Failure to Pay for Holidays and Days the Family is on Vacation

A full-time nanny should receive her guaranteed base weekly pay all 52 weeks of a year, whether you need her for all or part of a week or not. Nanny should only be docked for days when she is absent (sick, car trouble, whatever the reason) and there is no flexible leave time (paid time off) available. And remember, pay day should never be delayed - if you will be gone on your nanny's pay date please provide her pay in advance.

## 10. Issues Transporting the Children

If the nanny is required to use her personal vehicle for work purposes, you need to reimburse her for [mileage at the IRS stipulated amount](#), which is adjusted year to year. The nanny may be reluctant to use her vehicle. She may have perfectly reasonable liability and wear and tear concerns. We always recommend that families provide a vehicle for their child's transport, including age-appropriate safety seats. You are in the best position to assure proper maintenance, car seat installation, and insurance coverage on your own vehicle.

### Other Helpful Resources

- [Order Background Check](#)
- [Sample Nanny Job Application](#)
- [Sample Nanny Work Agreements](#)

*After more than two decades of speaking to nanny employers on a daily basis, we have compiled this list to help you learn from and avoid these common nanny hiring mistakes.*

*As a mother of three I completely understand the time pressures parents feel when they need to staff a nanny position. If you don't have the time to do this properly yourself, consider hiring a nanny agency to assist you.*

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