



How to hire a nanny

If you've never been an HR executive or had to hire anyone, hiring a nanny can seem like a daunting experience especially with all the bad stories circulating in the news. But with a little foresight and planning, it can go off without a hitch and you're sure to find the best care for your little one(s).

First Things First

One of the first things you'll need to do is figure out your childcare path. Do you plan on only having a nanny for 2 years and then moving the child to preschool? Will you have a nanny until Kindergarten? Or doing something in between. Do you plan to have a second child soon? Having a rough idea of these things helps decipher the type of person you're looking for.

Budget – Hiring a nanny is like taking on an employee. You'll need to provide payment for vacation & sick days and any extras you might want to give as incentive such as a subway card or yearly bonus. Plus if you're going to pay on the books, you may accrue additional costs. Figuring out a budget is critical for parents before they even start looking. The average cost of a nanny is \$450-700 a week.

The next step will decide what sort of parenting philosophy you have (assuming its undefined). You'll need a nanny to align to that philosophy or else there will run into trouble down the road. Even if your parenting philosophy isn't solidified yet, have a rough idea you can share. Do you want your kids to say please

and thank you? Do you want them to play more than anything else?

Armed with all that information, you can start creating your list of expectations and desires for that special person who will take care of your baby.

Creating the Framework

The best way I've seen nanny hiring go for new parents is to get started on creating an agreement or contract with a potential nanny before you actually start interviewing. This helps parents get as clear as possible in terms of what they expect as well as what type of person they want to hire. This also essentially creates the job description or narrows down candidates. Here are items you should talk through with yourself and/or your partner before you even start to look for a nanny.

- Hours and days: This is self explanatory what hours and days do you want someone? See below for some helpful tips.

- Pay- The average rate in 2012 for a nanny in NYC is \$450-700/week for 45-55 hours. This is the average so that price can fluctuate depending on hours and days. Most nannies work on an agreed upon salary per week based on certain number of hours + overtime. If you work out pay by the week vs. the hour, you'll need to get the hourly wage in order to figure out any overtime. Overtime is usually time and half.

- Frequency of pay (weekly, monthly, etc) – Most nannies are weekly but if you're going to do a nanny on the books, it may be bi-weekly.

- On or off the books – This is tough question for parents and nannies. Most nannies prefer to be off the books. But parents need to decide if the opportunity to have a tax write-off at the end of the year is greater than paying more over the course of the year. Your accountant should be able to crunch the numbers for you so plan on talking to them about it if you want

on the books. You'll also need to keep in mind if you hire someone on the books you may have to pay a service to handle the details and accounting for you so that's an additional cost.

-Vacation & Holidays – The average vacation for a nanny is 2 weeks a year. Legally you are required to give 3 days. Some parents let the nanny pick all the days while other families have 1 week of their choosing and the other week they decide. Whichever you choose, be clear with your nanny about your policy.

This goes for holidays too. Be clear about which ones she's expected to get off. I recommend a calendar you can give her with holidays as well as your vacation dates when you hire them.

-Sick Days – The number of sick days will depend on you and what you decide. The standard seems to be 2 days per year but its up to you entirely if you even want to allow them.

-Termination agreement – This is very important. This should spell out what you consider to be non-negotiable like hitting or leaving a baby unattended. Be clear here if you want them to be at-will, let them know. If you want to issue a one warning and the next one will be termination, say so.

-Confidentiality Agreement – While I personally don't feel this is a requirement, I have seen cases where this was not in place and it got parents in trouble. Just spell something out that's very simple and clear.

-House/Personal Rules – Examples are things like not eating in the living room, feeding the dog or inviting their friends over without asking. Other ideas are: can they arrange play dates? Can they take the baby to the city on the subway? On the bus? Just have a sense of what works for you and what makes you uncomfortable and make a rule out of it. Know too that you can always add or take away from this list too as you go.

-Ideals and parenting philosophy – You may not always know what yours is but make sure the nanny doesn't have a strong opinion. Her opinion should be your opinion. This is something parents never consider to ask a candidate because they don't

realize the trouble it may cause. Address it as best you can in the contract and let them know you'll instruct them on how you'll raise your child.

Examples of this are: on-demand feeding, sleep training, or wearing a carrier.

-Communication – How are they to communicate with you? Do you want daily notes of when they ate, what they did? A workbook? Phone calls? Check-ins? Let them know what you'd like.

-Misc. Requirements – Do you want the nanny to do light housekeeping? Feed or walk your dog? Cooking? Water plants? Be clear about what she's expected to do in the interview and include on the contract.

Optional Contact ideas:

-Raise schedule

-Yearly reevaluation

-Available for long nights or weekends

Scheduling Tips:

-Always give yourself an extra 20-30 minutes in the morning with regard to start and end time of your nanny. For example: If you need to be at work at 9 am and it takes you 45 minutes door-to-door then you'll want the nanny to come at 7:45. This gives you that 30 minute window because in the beginning there will be many factors that have you running behind.

-Make sure the nanny has some flexibility in her schedule to stay later than her appointed departure time. Unless you have a very predictable job you'll need this option- if even 15-20 minutes.

Also as a rule of thumb, I recommend mom's have a night (or 2) where they can take an extra hour to themselves to shop, run errands, meet a friend for a drink, have dinner with their partner or to workout.

Other Considerations to think over:

- What kind of experience is important to you?
- Do you want them to know the neighborhood? This can be very helpful in terms of knowing what's going on in the hood.
- Their physique – are they active? Could they chase down a toddler if need be? Will they get on the floor and play with a child? Are they physically able to carry 30+ lbs.?
- Do you want them to have first aid or CPR training? Will you pay for it?
- Background check – Will they agree to one?
- Second Language desired?

Once you've got this contract down, lets start looking for a nanny:

When should you start looking for a nanny?

This will depend on the candidate. Some people know that the family they work for will be moving or going to preschool weeks ahead of time. In that instance, you can interview 6-8 weeks ahead of time.

If you are planning on paying your nanny on the books you should start looking about 6 weeks before you want a nanny to start work. You'll need 20 days advance notice once you find a nanny to file her paperwork, so that gives you 3 weeks to find the right one.

Creating an ad:

While you should respond to as many ads as fit your criteria, if you decide to post include the following information for best results:

- Desired Start Date (this can be a range) – as a general rule of thumb, you'll want a few days introduction period where she can see how you are with your baby and you can see how she is with your baby. You'll want to give them alone, as well as give yourself time to spy on them and get ready to go back to work.
- Hours needed per week (and flexibility if need)

- Responsibilities
 - Basic parenting philosophy and how that will affect the Nanny's job
 - Need for documented worker/ paying on the books
 - Pay Range you can afford
 - Age of your child (ren)?
 - Any special qualifications? (College degree, daycare experience, etc.)
 - Job Duties – this is the light housekeeping/dog walking, etc.
- Include some personal information about the baby and how you and/or your partner are so a candidate can get a sense of if they can work for you. Be clear and honest for best results.

Where do you post/search for nannies?

Here are a few resources for looking for a nanny:

Mommy Bites: <http://mommybites.com/newyork/child-care/nanny-post/nanny-post-view/>

Park Slope Parents – Yahoo group, \$25 membership fee

Craig's List – Exercise some caution here but I've known a few people who've found great childcare here.

Beyond Care Coop - <http://www.beyondcare.coop/>

Prenatal Yoga Center -

<http://www.prenatalyogacenter.com/forums/nanny-sitter-exchange/>

Friend's nannies – They often network and know if someone is looking

Friends and Friends of Friends – send out a note to your nearest and dearest and ask if anyone knows of a good nanny candidate.

Now that you have a candidate or three...

Before you interview a candidate in person always do a brief phone interview to see if you want to pursue them and check their references. You'll need ask the most basic questions: when are you available to start, what happened with your last position, what age did you start working with that family, names

and phone numbers of references and salary requirements. Also mention if you have pets & ask if they're OK with them. Once you have those questions answered, tell them a little bit about what you're looking for and if that is something they're interested in. If so, tell them you'll call them back. **The first thing you do after you like someone on the phone is to check his or her references.** Do this by placing a call to the person. Do not email them.

What should you ask on a reference call?

First thank them for their time. Get the correct spelling of their name.**

- Ask them to briefly tell you about their time with the nanny (dates), their child (ren)'s ages and their experience as a whole. Let them do the talking and write down anything that catches your attention so you can ask about it when they finish.
- Ask them about their parenting philosophy and how the nanny was at following or not following that philosophy.
- Ask them what they loved the most about the nanny
- Ask them what they liked the least. This can be a deal-breaker. If you're a strict/do as I say parent and the nanny can be contrary, you may not want to hire them.
- Asked them if there's anything they feel you should know about the nanny
- Ask them what they paid the nanny the nanny when she started and what they paid her at the end
- How many vacation and/or sick days they gave them and if they gave any extras like Metrocard or phone allowance.
- Ask why employment ended
- What were some of the things that her references said about the candidate that made you want to hire them? Have you found those things to be true?
- What is the nanny's personality? Why did her personality work with your personality? With your child (ren)'s personality?
- Is your Nanny neat & organized? (Do you care?)

- Is she structured or unstructured? Does she make things up throughout the day or does she already have her week planned on Monday? (OR Did you structure things for her?)
- How do they handle conflict? How about pressure? Stress? Ask for examples.
- Does the candidate have children? How many and what are their ages
- Was the Nanny punctual? Reliable and dependable? Can you give me an example of when she was/was not?
- Does the nanny have any health problems that limited their ability to do the job?
- How well did she/he follow directions?
- Has she done anything that makes you doubt her trustworthiness?
- What would your friends say about her behind your back?
- Do you recommend that I hire this person to be a Nanny for my child (ren)?

****** Once you're done with the phone call check the reference out via Facebook, Linked-in, personal websites, etc. You'll need to verify that the person is who they say they are after you've spoken. Be on the lookout for fake references; sadly this is a very common occurrence.

Something to keep an ear on:

-If you notice any hesitation or the referee skirting away from a potential problem at any time, point this out to them and simply ask them why they seem reluctant or avoiding giving a direct answer to the question about the candidate.

Time to Interview the candidate(s)

Once you've spoken to at least 2 references and the reviews are consistent, time to schedule your one-on-one with the nanny.

Setting up an interview:

-Make sure to schedule the meeting with your spouse/partner. If they can't be there, invite a friend or family member over to get a second opinion. (Those early days of pregnancy don't have us as sharp as we want to be and there's no harm having a second opinion). Also this will help if anything comes up with the baby and one of you needs to excuse yourself to deal with it.

Start off the interview by having the nanny answer these questions:

- Have the nanny tell you about their work experiences. Listen to how they speak and the examples they give you.
- Ask them what they love about being a nanny. You'll really want a nanny that loves babies and children and shows it.
- Ask them what they're looking for in a nanny position
- Ask them what their least favorite thing to do is

Here are some basic interview questions. I recommend printing this page and crossing off questions that aren't important to you and highlighting the ones that are. They may seem redundant. That's ok – you're just making sure that you're getting consistent answers as well as clarifying the job and your expectations:

Interview Questions:

When can you start?

Share your salary budget and ask if that's workable.

What special skills do you possess?

Mention if you have pets and inquire whether that is an issue for the candidate.

Ask if they're physically fit to carry babies up stairs or down stairs (assuming you have any)

Are you willing to submit to a background check?

Present your contract and go over the details: hours, time, pay range, start date and family rules. See if there is anything in there they can't agree to. If you want light housekeeping and

they refuse to do it or if you want someone to cook meals for the baby and they don't know how to cook, figure out if you can live with that or not. Decide if it's a deal breaker.

Look to make sure the answers the nanny gives you are consistent with their references. Check how you're feeling about this person and what your gut is telling you. Trust your instincts when hiring a Nanny. You'll know if something is remiss.

If you feel comfortable with the person, you might ask if they want to hold the baby. It's always reassuring to new parents to see how a potential nanny handles the baby. If you have pets also make sure to introduce the candidate to them to see how they react.

Red Flags

- Was the candidate on time? Were they dressed for an interview?
- Did they wash their hands before you offered the baby for them to hold?
- How was their interaction with the baby? Did they seem easy about it like it was second nature? Did they engage with the baby?
- Did the nanny seem interested in the job by asking you questions?
- Are they in agreement with your contact?

Time to hire the best candidate:

Hopefully you've narrowed down the list to one or two persons and you're ready to hire them. Before you make the offer, tell the candidate that you like them and want to hire them after a trial period or a few Saturdays. A trial period is good for everyone. It gives jumpy parents a sense of how the nanny works or does not work with the family. Be clear that this is a trial period and if all goes well you'll hire them.

Assuming a trial period goes well – time to make the offer & get the contract signed!

Print 2 copies of the contract and go over all the info again like hours, pay, pay frequency, expectations, rules, etc. You can have her initial each page or you can just have her sign the end indicating she agrees to all the terms. Shake hands and you're done! OR almost!

Final Safety Measures:

Emergency Contact Sheet:

Make sure you have an emergency contact sheet in easy reach for the nanny or a babysitter. This sheet should contains:

- Listing of emergency contacts like family nearby or friends that they can reach out to in case they can't reach you/your spouse or partner.
- Pediatrician's name and contact home number
- Nearest hospital (and specify if you have one you like better)
- Copy of your health insurance card
- Notes about your child's health such as allergies to medication, foods, or existing medical conditions.

You might also consider leaving some petty or emergency cash for the nanny. This may not apply to a baby as much but as they get older and spend more time out of the house, it comes in handy for popsicles and snacks on the go!

Just some final words:

Keep the lines of Communication open. It will make you happy and your nanny happy. If you don't like something, tell them right away. If you prefer something done a different way, do so. And ask her if there's anything you can do to make it easier for her to do her job.

Communicate with them about the baby's progress and ask the nanny to do the same. This is very helpful for new parents who may not have a lot of infant experience as a nanny will and she can tell you if its normal or not. It also helps as infants shift into new phases that working parents might not be aware

of the fact that little Johnny doesn't take his nap at 11 anymore, its more like 12:30 or that every time you leave peas to eat, he throws them on the floor.

Be respectful of the agreements you've made with the nanny. If you're late, tell them. If you know you have a large project that may keep you all week, tell them. Its better to be upfront about what's going on then dealing with resentment later on.

Respect nannies and their private lives or expectations of their family. They have a hard job too and many go home to more work.

Resources:

Background Checks

You may feel inclined to run a background check on your potential Nanny be sure to notify them. Search all names a nanny has had, including (but not limited to) your Nanny's maiden AND married name. Here are a few places to get them done:

-The State of New York Office of Child and Family Services <http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/cps/http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/Forms/cps/>

-New York Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

<http://www.nydmv.state.ny.us/abstract.htm>

(The New York DMV offers what they call a "masked abstract." A "masked abstract" provides you with any prior license or driving convictions, accidents, suspensions, or revocations. However, to get a "masked abstract" you must get permissible use prior to obtaining. To find out more information (and also to find out what you can and cannot obtain in a "masked abstract" visit the New York DMV online: <http://www.nydmv.state.ny.us/qaprive.htm>)

-The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services <http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/ojis/recordreview.htm>
-Sex Offender Registry A free search is available through the Division of Criminal Justice Services:
criminaljustice.state.ny.us/nor/.
-Private Organizations You can also pay a small fee to an organization who can run background checks for you: 4 Nannies: <http://www.4nannies.com/background/>
Nanny Pro:
<http://www.nannypro.com/content/pages/background-checks>
My Nanny Track: <http://www.mynannytrack.com/>
Contract Samples: <http://www.mynannycontract.com/nanny-contract/>

Other Resources:

Domestic Workers Bill of Rights:
<http://www.labor.ny.gov/legal/domestic-workers-bill-of-rights.shtm>