



A2Z Au Pairs



Founder Member of British Au Pair Agencies Association
and member of International Au Pair Association



Some helpful hints on how to make the most of your Au Pair experience

The most important thing to remember is that an Au Pair is not an employee. They are a young willing helper coming to live as part of your family to experience English family life and be of help to you. In exchange for their own bedroom and full board and lodging and a minimum of **£70** pocket money per week, they help you with light housework and childcare. If you make the effort to integrate the Au Pair into your family life you stand a chance of the Au Pair being a willing flexible helper rather than a dogmatic employee or CLEANER!

Remember that the Au Pair expects to be treated as part of your family – successful relationships are founded on mutual trust and respect and time spent achieving this will reap rewards.

It is essential that you are honest about your requirements and if you wish to amend your timetable you need to gain the commitment from your Au Pair. Think about things from the Au Pairs point of view rather than just your own – by doing this you are more likely to come up with workable solutions to most problems!

If you require extra hours you must be prepared to pay for them and we recommend approx £4 per hour. Put yourselves in the Au pairs position – Is the additional pay reasonable for the additional work required? Would you be happy to undertake the role yourself if you were an Au Pair.?

When your Au Pair arrives they may well be homesick – they may not make it apparent because they could well be embarrassed about it. Do encourage them to phone home to say that they have arrived safely. Try to encourage them to relax and settle in and remember that they are the fish out of water – not you! They are in a new country having to communicate in their second language and they are going to need help and patience to adjust.

When your Au Pair first arrives they will have endured a long journey and may be tired and disorientated so they may take a few days to recover. You should give them time to settle in before expecting them to be immediate help.

Families and Au Pairs often experience a culture shock at the beginning of the relationship. Things that you may find different are eating habits – type of food and times of meals. Try to be tolerant and flexible within reason.

General Guidance points

1. Write down a timetable and list of duties for the Au Pair and go through it with them to make sure that they understand everything. The standard timetable is 5 hours a day for 5 days a week with an additional 2 evenings of babysitting on their working days. If you want the Au Pair to babysit on one of their days off you should consider additional pocket money as sweetener.
 - a. If you want to make amendments to the timetable make sure that you all agree changes in advance.
 - b. Additional hours over 25 per week are normally paid at approx £4 per hour.
2. Encourage the Au Pair to be honest about not understanding something that you have said. They must feel that you are tolerant and approachable about this or you risk them saying yes without understanding and all sorts of problems then arise.
3. Discuss how you expect them to discipline your children – **TELL THEM THAT THEY MUST NEVER SMACK YOUR CHILDREN OR LEAVE THEM UNATTENDED** – This should be common sense but if you positively discuss it you will avoid future misunderstandings.
4. Make sure that they understand your house rules – smoking, drinking, friend coming to visit etc. You may want to impose curfew restrictions relating to going out at night. Restrictions during their working days are totally reasonable but do remember that they should be able to have a social life in their free time and are young adults. If they want to go away for a night in their free time this should be acceptable but you are well within your right to want to know where they are going and who with in case you need to contact them in an emergency.
5. Take your Au Pair to your local GP and register them. The GP should be happy to take them on as an NHS patient. Dental treatment will not be on the NHS. They will be expected to pay as a private patient
6. Find out about the local language school and encourage them to attend. By doing this you can guide the Au Pair to choose the most suitable course that fits in with your family timetable. Some Au Pairs do not want to go to college because of the expense. Still try and get them to go for a couple of sessions as this is the best way to meet other local Au Pairs and make friends.