

## How to interview a babysitter

By Christine Koh—Care.com contributing writer

Interviews are essential when searching for a sitter. Cover the basics, then focus on your rapport with the candidate using conversational questions. Here are some questions to get you started:

### Basic questions:

- Name, phone, address, age, citizenship status
- Availability (e.g., after school, evenings, weekends, short notice)
- Rates
- References (request name and contact information for 2-3 references)

### Conversational questions:

- Tell me about your experience with children (e.g. babysat siblings, has children)? What age ranges do you have experience with, and are you most comfortable with?
- What activities do you like doing with kids? Are you willing to go on short, nearby outings (e.g. park, library)?
- How do you comfort and discipline children? How have you handled crying children or temper tantrums in the past?
- What is your comfort level with cooking and preparing meals for kids?
- Are you comfortable with bathing children and bedtime routines?
- Have you had problems in the past following directives like discipline, development, and daily routines?
- What have been the most challenging and rewarding parts about being a babysitter?
- What was your scariest or most difficult babysitting moment? How did you handle the situation?
- Have you ever had to handle a child emergency? What did you do and what was the outcome? Do you have infant and child CPR certification? Would you be willing to receive such training?
- What do you enjoy doing in your free time?
- For teenage sitters: How are your grades? What do you enjoy doing outside the classroom? Are your parents supportive of your babysitting?

Once you have covered your questions, encourage open communication and ask if they have questions for you. Then, post-interview, follow up with the sitter's references and ask about creativity, dependability, communication abilities, strengths, weakness, and why she's no longer working for them.

Interviews are key to determining whether a babysitter is a good match for your family. Outline your questions in advance to help guide the conversation.

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## How to interview a nanny

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Interviews can be stressful, no matter which side of the table you're on. But you'll need to gear up to ask questions if you wish to find a nanny well-suited to your needs. Also be prepared to evaluate performance regularly after the hire.

### What to Ask

After you have figured out your nanny needs and compensation, it's time to start targeting candidates. Here is a summary of the types of questions you will want to cover.

Various web sites offer a breakdown of specific age-related questions to ask and they are compiled here:

- **The nanny experience:** Why do you enjoy being a nanny? What have been the most challenging and rewarding parts about being a nanny? What are your strengths and weaknesses as a nanny? Why did the previous position come to an end?
- **Childrearing philosophies:** Do you have a teaching philosophy (e.g. academic vs. learn through play)? How do you comfort and discipline children? How have you handled crying children and temper tantrums in the past?
- **Activities:** What are your favorite activities to do with babies, toddlers, and older kids? Are you willing to explore the surroundings (e.g. library, museums, parks) and engage in/supervise play dates?
- **Taking direction:** Have you had problems in the past following directives re: discipline, development, and daily routines?
- **Handling emergencies:** Have you ever had to handle a child emergency? What did you do and what was the outcome? Do you have infant and child CPR certification? Would you be willing to receive such training?
- **Nutrition:** What types of meals and snacks would you prepare at home, or select for the child if eating out of the home?
- **Personal:** What do you enjoy doing in your free time? Are there short- or long-term personal goals milestones on your radar (going back to school, engagement, etc.)?

### After the Interview

If the interview goes well, you'll then want to:

- Contact the references: Ask about creativity, dependability, communication abilities, strengths, weakness, and why she's no longer working for them.
- Have an agency perform criminal background and driving record checks: Use the relevant information your potential nanny provided. (Note: if your candidate hesitated or refused a background check, take this as a warning sign.)
- Have the finalist(s) come one at a time to meet your child. See how they interact and trust your instincts.

### How to interview a nanny (continued)

Once you have hired your nanny, feedback and communication are essential. Have your nanny keep a daily activity log so you know about activities, naps, and meals/snacks. Touch base periodically with any concerns (or praise!) about the daily routine. Also schedule a formal evaluation every six months to make sure you and your nanny are on the same page about your child's evolving needs. Regular evaluation and increased compensation with good performance (typically, annually) will help keep your nanny motivated and connected.

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