

{ at-home care checklist

One-on-one babysitting in your home. The provider may live with you or "live out." **Cost:** \$1,200 to \$4,000 a month.

what to look for

- Does the caregiver have a parenting philosophy that is similar to yours?
- Does the caregiver speak English well enough to handle an emergency?
- A valid driver's license and insurance if she'll be transporting your child.
- Use an agency, or place ads in your local paper to find candidates. International Nanny Association President Pat Cascio recommends, "Professional nanny referral agencies have expertise in screening and selecting the highest quality childcare providers in their area." If placing a newspaper ad, use the phone to screen thoroughly. Only interview the top candidates and always check references.

red flags to avoid

- A candidate who is reluctant to supply references.
- or unwilling to submit to a background check at your expense.
- Caregiver with an unstable personal life or unreliable transportation.
- Someone whose child rearing philosophy, including discipline, is at odds with yours.

legal requirements

Paying all relevant taxes and checking the caregiver's immigration status is your responsibility. Nanny and au pair agencies typically run national and state background checks on their clients. If you plan to videotape a nanny caring for your child, check first with an attorney and get the nanny's consent in advance.

advantages

- * Provides one-on-one care that may be more nurturing.
- * More convenient than transporting your child to and from a daycare facility.
- * If you have an early schedule, there's no need to wake your sleeping baby as the provider comes to your home.

disadvantages

- * You'll have to make other arrangements if your nanny is sick, dealing with a family emergency or on vacation.
- * Difficult to monitor quality of care.
- * Can be expensive.
- * Loss of privacy.

where to learn more

- * International Nanny Association: nanny.org, 888-878-1477
- * Alliance of Professional Nanny Agencies: theapna.org
- * Au Pair in America: aupairinamerica.com, 800-928-7247
- * U.S. Department of State: state.gov (search for "What You Need to Know")

