



The ABC's of a Successful Year as a Host Family

ALCOHOL – Explain laws regarding alcohol, i.e., underage drinking and drinking while driving. Generally, age limits are much younger for drinking in other countries. Au Pairs have been taught in Orientation that if they are under 21, there is no drinking at all. Make sure your au pair knows that she is not to get in the car with someone who has been drinking.

APPLIANCES – Review directions for all the appliances. Some, like garbage disposals, are not common in other countries. If your au pair has arrived from in person orientation - offer the use of the washer and dryer right away, as many au pairs arrive with a limited wardrobe and have no chance to do laundry at while there.

BATHROOM – If the au pair is sharing a bathroom with family members, discuss scheduling, reasonable length of use, and housekeeping responsibilities.

CAMERAS – If you have video cameras in the home, make sure they are in the common areas and your au pair is aware of the reason they are there – safety issues.

CALENDAR – Explain the importance of entering classes, meetings, and social activities on the family calendar. Discuss what is acceptable notice for a calendar change.

CAR – If the au pair is allowed to drive, set guidelines on when and where. Explain seat belt and car seat laws, what to do in an emergency, what to do in case of an accident, and who is responsible for the insurance deductible (up to \$500) if there is a claim. **Host families are responsible for providing transportation to and from classes and au pair meetings. You may want to set aside funds or the time required to help your au pair if her driving skills need a refresher or a cultural shift to local rules.**

COMMUNICATION - The foundation of a good match is clear and consistent communication. Schedule a weekly meeting when the kids are asleep or not at home.

CONTRACT – Please abide by the host family contract. Do not ask the au pair to work more than 45 hours per week or more than 10 hours a day – even for compensation. All duties must be childcare related. The one weekend off per month begins on Friday evening and ends on Monday morning.

CULTURE- This is a cultural exchange program, make sharing her culture part of your family's experience. She is learning about the US culture everyday by living with you.

CURFEW – Set a reasonable curfew for a young adult – you may want an earlier one for workdays. Once you have established a relationship of trust, you might allow your au pair more freedom. Responsible behavior should be rewarded.

DISASTERS – Review emergency procedures in case of fire and tornado and storm warnings. Make sure she knows what county she lives in. Reach out to your CC to confirm safety of all after a disaster.

EXERCISE – Encourage physical activity. Hanging around the house can lead to lethargy and depression, particularly during the winter. Membership at a Y or health club should be encouraged. Children will also see a healthy and active role model.

FAMILY – Treat your au pair as part of the family. Kindness, friendship, and empathy is so important.

FOOD – Where in the house may food be taken? What are the house rules on meals and snacking?

GUESTS – Set guidelines on entertaining guests, including overseas guests, in the home.

HOUSEWORK – What is the au pair expected to do? All housework should be childcare related. Be specific about your expectations. Make sure she knows what to do in case of a housework emergency – child wets bed, dog gets sick, grape juice is spilled, etc.

HOUSEHOLD – Be sure that your au pair knows what to do if the toilet overflows and where your main water valve and fuse box are located.

ICE – Set rules for using car and guidelines for personal safety when weather and roads are bad.

JUNK FOOD – Be clear about what you children may and may not be fed. Overindulging on junk food is not good for the au pair either.

KITCHEN – Discuss expectations for keeping the kitchen neat and clean. Again, be specific about such things as wiping off the counters or cleaning up crumbs, etc. from under the table.

LAUNDRY – Give detailed instructions about sorting, how much detergent to use and emptying the lint trap, etc.

MEDICAL RELEASE – Make sure that the children's doctors know that you have an au pair. Have a medical release on hand in case of an emergency.

MONEY – Set a weekly payday. Help her open a bank account. Set up direct deposit payments for her stipend into her account or have a written record of all transactions.

NEIGHBORS – Give your au pair a summary of the neighborhood, including introductions to the nearest neighbors, where to go for help or a spare key.

ORIENTATION – Allow three days to train your au pair on the basics and to let her settle in before leaving your au pair alone with the children. Use the first week to orient your au pair to her new city. Show her around your area as you would any newcomer or guest. Point out places that she will want to visit in the future.

PRIVACY – It is not only important that the au pair and host parents honor each other's privacy, but that the children are taught never to enter the au pair's room without permission.

QUESTIONS – Give her the opportunity to ask questions. Sometimes au pairs are reticent about approaching host parents. Arrange several times in the first few weeks to meet with your au pair without the kids around. Set up a time for a weekly meeting throughout the au pair's year.

RECREATION – Keep in mind that this is supposed to be fun for both the au pair and the kids. Leave time in the daily schedule for play.

RESPECT – Teach your children to respect your au pair as they would respect you. When she is on duty, she is in charge. Show them you respect her.

SAFETY – Discuss safety procedures for the children, child proofing devices, and location of first aid supplies. Explain 911. Be clear about your rules regarding locking windows and doors, car doors, and opening the door to strangers.

SCHEDULE – Provide a written schedule for your au pair in advance so she can make plans for her free time. Scheduling day to day leads to uncertainty and frustration.

SCHOOL – Make sure your children’s schools know the name of your au pair and whether they may release your child to the au pair in case of sickness or an emergency.

TELEPHONE/INTERNET/CELL PHONE & TEXTING – Be very clear about the rules for all of these items. Au Pairs should not be on the phone or internet when they are working. They should not be on the cell phone when they are driving! Remind her that the host family cell phone is only for calls in the US. She should use WhatsApp or video chat with her friends and family in her home country. Your au pair needs access to your WiFi. Review the dangers and penalties for texting and driving and how to ensure safety in the car.

TELEVISION – Set limits on how much and what may be watched. Au Pairs should not be watching TV while working or using the TV to entertain children.

THANKS – Everyone needs to feel appreciated. Please notice and comment on the good job your au pair is doing. You may think it is just part of her job, but the au pair will need it to be noticed.

THERMOSTAT - Explain if and how your au pair should adjust temperatures in the home. Zones, comfortable temperatures, energy conservation habits all differ from family to family.

UNDERSTANDING – Understand that the au pair may be dealing with both a language and cultural barrier at first. The word for the first month is **PATIENCE!** She may not truly be herself for the first 30 days as she will be adapting to her new country, home and work – please don’t judge her before then.

VACATION – Discuss the best time for the au pair to take her two weeks of paid vacation. The final decision must be agreed upon mutually. The formula is number of vacation days = 2 X usual number of days in work week. For a 5 day work week, this is 10 working days of vacation. Most families provide the weekend if a full week is taken.

WINDOWS – Discuss opening windows with the au pair – air conditioning is not as common in Europe.

X-RATED – Make sure your au pair knows the rating system in the US – and understands what it means.

YOUTH – Remember that your au pair is a young adult (post adolescent). She is still growing and learning just as we all did at that age. She will make mistakes – she will get on your nerves. **Please treat her as you would want your own child treated** in a foreign country.

ZZZZZs – Remind the au pair of the importance of getting enough sleep. Kids move fast. Au pairs must be alert!