

INTERVIEWING A NANNY

Q. I am hiring a nanny. What questions should I ask candidates?

A. Asking how a potential nanny feels about a variety of subjects is an important way to learn about the person who will care for your child. When interviewing, prepare a list of questions ahead of time to make sure you don't forget anything.

Start with a general question like "Why did you decide to become a nanny?" suggests Debra Sugrue, director of NanniesPlus.com, a nanny placement service and online resource for caregivers and families. The answer should reveal the candidate's

deep love of children, a vital quality in the person who will spend long hours caring for your child.

Next ask about the candidate's childcare experience; she should tell you about her past jobs plus any formal childcare training, and relevant work experience such as tutoring, camp-counseling, and baby-sitting.

To gain an understanding of the nanny's child-rearing philosophy (is she a disciplinarian, or more of a softie?), offer examples of situations that could arise, such as "What would you do if my child threw a tantrum in the park or at the supermarket?" Discussing specific situations is often easier for people than speaking in ideological terms.

You may want to also include questions that address the nanny's hobbies and interests, her own family, and whether she is looking for a long-term position or only say, a part-time or year-long job.

Finally, describe in as much detail as possible your expectations and the job requirements. Review the hours, salary, benefits (such as health insurance), days off, and additional responsibilities (cooking or cleaning, for example). At the end of the interview, ask if she has any questions, so you both come away feeling that you know each other better.