



How to Keep a Great Nanny

Good, consistent childcare is worth its weight in gold. It's good for the children and good for the family. Here are some guidelines to help you become an employer of choice:

MAKE A WORK AGREEMENT.

This does not have to be a contract drawn up by a lawyer. Rather, it should contain a simple listing of your expectations and promises:

- The nanny's duties (including household responsibilities, if any)
- Work hours and pay (weekly or hourly)
- The handling of taxes
- Benefits: vacations (yours and hers), sick days, health insurance, if relevant
- Plans for transporting children to school or activities
- Plan for on-going communication and review of these agreements.

TREAT THE NANNY WITH RESPECT.

Treating your caregiver like a servant in a Victorian household is a sure way to send her looking for a new job. Treating a nanny with respect will also influence your children. Children who make unreasonable demands, or who treat their nannies like personal maids, do not endear themselves to otherwise loving childcare providers.

DON'T ADD EXTRA DUTIES WITHOUT EXTRA PAY. This is your employee. You have an obligation to set up certain work conditions. You can expect her to walk the dog, clean the kitchen and take your clothes to the dry cleaner only if those duties are included in her initial job description. If you need to add extra responsibilities, you should first ask the caregiver and then expect to pay more.

MEET YOUR TIME OBLIGATIONS. Repeated lateness will affect your nanny in the same way that her lateness would affect you.

KEEP YOUR EXPECTATIONS REALISTIC. Could you handle all the responsibilities that you are expecting from the nanny? As the children grow, do these demands remain reasonable?

EXPRESS YOUR APPRECIATION. People respond to compliments, they revel in positive reinforcement. If you can't raise your nanny's salary, consider other expressions of your appreciation: tickets to a movie or concert, a meal out at a restaurant, a gas company credit card, membership in a health club, a cell phone, a flight home, use of your vacation home or a contribution to her health insurance. Small or large, these gifts send a message.

BE A GOOD EMPLOYER. People work best in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. They appreciate good, predictable, and reasonable work conditions. If you are a good employer, you should expect a faithful, committed worker.

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