



Bright Horizons.

Insider Guide



What is an Au Pair?

In this Insider Guide we look at defining what an Au Pair is and considerations you should think about when recruiting one.

An Au Pair is a single person between the age of 17 and 30, without dependents who wishes to travel to another country in order to live with a family, so they can learn the language and improve their understanding of local culture.

In exchange for their board and lodging and some pocket money, Au Pairs are expected to do some light housework, such as cleaning, cooking or ironing, and carry out childcare duties.

The Au Pair should be treated as a member of your family and will usually stay from 6 months to 2 years.

Although you might assume that Au Pairs are female, there are a growing number of young men who want to take on this role. They prove very popular, especially for families whose children enjoy plenty of active play. An Au Pair should not have sole charge of a child below the age of 2 years.



The two types of Au Pair

1. Au Pair

An Au Pair can work up to 30 hours and do two evenings of babysitting each week. Exactly how the hours are spread over the week are up to you, but normal practice is 5 hours work a day with 2 full days off. Expect to pay 'pocket money' of £80-£150 a week.

2. Au Pair PLUS

An Au Pair PLUS will work up to 35 hours per week and also do two evenings of babysitting each week. Expect to pay 'pocket money' of £90 - £200 a week.

Where do Au Pairs come from?

At time of writing you can choose an Au Pair from any of the EEU (European Economic Union) member states. Additionally, nationals of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland can also be an au pair in the UK. If an au pair is outside of these countries, they will need a visa, either the Tier 5 Youth Mobility Scheme or Tier 4 General Student visa.

NB government clarity on the immigration status of EEU au pairs is pending and due to change when the transition period ends in 2021. Until then au pairs have freedom of movement to come and go from Europe.

What qualifications does an Au Pair need?

Au Pairs are unlikely to have any childcare qualifications, although you may find someone who has babysitting experience or who has assisted with younger siblings. Because of this, you should supervise your Au Pair until you feel sure that he or she has the proper skills to care for your children when you are not around.

What age range does an Au Pair look after?

As a general rule, Au Pairs look after older children (ideally of school age). This is because they often do not have enough childcare experience and training to care for babies and young children, and also because they may well be at language school during school hours.

What is an Au Pair expected to do?

There are no fixed rules about the exact role of an Au Pair, although the focus should be on childcare and not housework. Light housework only is part of the role and is usually undertaken when the children are at school or nursery. This would typically include dusting, vacuuming, ironing, washing, cooking - but not washing down the paintwork, cleaning the drains and scrubbing the floors. Many families employ a cleaner or use an ironing service on top of an au pair.

The advantages of recruiting an Au Pair:

1. **Flexibility.** You can be ten minutes late coming home from work, for example, without it being too much of a problem, since your Au Pair is based at home.
2. **Inexpensive.** The current recommended weekly allowance for an Au Pair is around £100
3. **A learning experience for all the family.** Just as Au Pairs come to learn about our culture, you can learn from them. Your children will get a chance to start learning a foreign language and many families develop strong friendships with their Au Pairs
4. **On-the-spot childcare.** Your agreement will usually include two evenings of babysitting - and you can pay for more if your Au Pair is willing. Also, having an Au Pair means that you can run to the shops for that loaf of bread you forgot, without having to take all the children with you.
5. **Another pair of hands.** Au Pairs can offer an immediate support that few other childcare options can: washing up after a meal so that you can spend time with your children, picking them up from school, keeping an eye on older children as they do their homework.

The considerations for recruiting an Au Pair:

1. **Uncertainty.** Generally there's no face-to-face interview. You will not get the chance to meet your au pair before you send a letter of invitation, so there's inevitably a risk attached. However, an agency will try to match people and reduce the risk of a personality clash.
2. **Your Au Pair may be inexperienced.** It's possible that your au pair will be unaccustomed to children - and dishwashers, washing machines and other electrical gadgets. If this is important to you, don't forget to ask first.
3. **You lose out on privacy.** You will be sharing your home with someone you don't know, and so your family's privacy will be reduced.
4. **Your Au Pair could get homesick.** If this is your au pair's first visit away from home, be prepared for a certain amount of homesickness - and try to help. A little extra time spent settling in your Au Pair will pay off in the long term.
5. **Your Au Pair will move on.** If you are looking for long-term childcare, then this option is probably not for you. Stays of around six to 12 months are usual.

6. **There may be language barriers.** Remember, your Au Pair is here to learn English, so their spoken English could be limited at first. Try to find out about your Au Pair's language skills before you make any commitment, especially if you are planning on leaving your children in your Au Pair's care - it could be vital in an emergency.
7. **You have no qualified childcare help.** Au Pairs don't generally have childcare qualifications. This is why it is most important that you don't use an Au Pair for your childcare if you have young children or are working full-time away from home.

To sum up

If your children are no longer babies, and you have enough space at home, then you might like to think about becoming a host family for an Au Pair. This can work well if:

- Your children are of school age
- You live near a college or language school where your Au Pair can learn English
- You have enough space for an extra person to stay with you
- There are other Au Pairs living in the area.



Further information

For more Au Pair related information, please see the resources below.

Organisation	Website	Contact
Gov.UK <i>Au pairs and the law</i>	www.gov.uk/au-pairs-employment-law/au-pairs	N/A
British Au Pair Agencies Association <i>BAPAA is the only recognised Trade Association for the au pair industry in Britain</i>	bapaa.org.uk/	N/A
AuPair.com <i>Au Pair Changes around Brexit</i>	www.aupair.com/en/au-pair-blog/for-au-pair/brexit-au-pair.php	Telephone: +49 221 310 61 840 Email: info@aupair.com
Gov.UK <i>Tier 5 Youth Mobility visa</i>	www.gov.uk/tier-5-youth-mobility	N/A
Gov.UK <i>Tier 4 General Student visa</i>	www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa	N/A



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