

Au Pair Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Is Au Pair just a fancy way of saying nanny?

No. Au pairs and nannies are distinct. The au pair program is a cultural exchange that brings young individuals from other countries to experience life with an American family. In exchange for room, board, and a weekly stipend, they assist with childcare for up to 45 hours per week. Nannies, on the other hand, are childcare professionals who may live in or outside the home.

2. How long does an au pair stay with a family?

One year with an option for a one-time extension of an additional six, nine, or twelve months. An au pair can remain in the program for a maximum of two years.

	Au Pair	Nanny
Experience	Typically amateur experience	Childcare professional
Qualifications	18-26 years old, Citizen of a participating country	Often, Bachelors or Associates degree, Several years of professional childcare experience, No age restrictions
Employment Status	Not an employee, a member of the household	Domestic employee
On/Working time	Up to 45 hours per week	No limit, but overtime expected over 40 hours/week
Live In Status	Must live with the family	Can live with the family or separately
Off time	Often spent with the host family (similar to a teenager living at home)	Typically not spent with the family
Visa	Au Pairs receive J-1 visas as participants in a cultural exchange program	Nannies typically work in their home countries
Costs	\$195.75/week regardless of time worked	Negotiated yearly or hourly wage based on local wages, at least minimum wage

3. Where do au pairs come from?

Au pairs come from various countries, including France, Germany, South Africa, Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, China, Thailand, and many others.

4. Can an au pair teach my kids to speak in a different language?

Yes, but it depends on the agency. Some agencies have rules regarding the use of the au pair's native language during childcare time.

5. How many kids can an au pair care for? Are there age restrictions?

State department regulations do not limit the number of children an au pair can care for. Au pairs can care for children between 3 months and 15 years old.

6. Can an au pair care for children with special needs?

Yes, but parents in this situation would want to be particularly careful in selecting an au pair who is compatible with the family's home life.

7. How long does it take to find an au pair?

It depends. Typically, it takes 6-8 weeks from au pair selection to arrival in your home, but it can take as little as two weeks or as long as several months depending on your family's needs and selection criteria.

8. How do I choose an au pair?

Au pairs go through State Department-approved agencies. Each agency maintains a unique database. Families review profiles, interview, and select an au pair. The matching process is mutual, requiring agreement from both the au pair and the host family.

9. What happens if the au pair doesn't fit into our family?

Agencies have processes in place to support rematch and replacement for the au pair and the family.

10. How much does it cost?

In addition to an annual agency fee, au pairs are paid a weekly stipend of \$195.75. Agency fees vary, typically ranging from \$8000-\$12000. Discounts are available for repeat families, veterans, and other groups.

11. Are there other costs?

Families pay for up to \$500 towards an au pair's 6 required educational credits and must cover the au pair's car insurance and domestic phone number, if needed. Families also provide room and board to the au pair.

12. Am I eligible to host an au pair?

To be eligible, you need at least one child between 3 months and 15 years old and a private bedroom for the au pair.

13. Does an au pair have to have a private bathroom?

No, an au pair is allowed to share a bathroom.

14. What kind of tasks can an au pair perform?

Child-related tasks include helping with homework, transportation, meal preparation, cleaning up after the kids, outings, and assisting with bathing and dressing.

15. What kinds of tasks are not appropriate for an au pair to perform?

Au pairs should not be asked to do heavy cleaning or household tasks beyond what is expected of other family members unless directly related to the children.

16. Can au pairs drive?

Yes, but like anywhere, driving ability is an individual skill and can be dependent on an au pair's specific lifestyle. Make sure to ask perspective au pairs questions about their driving history and experience.

17. My kids are in school, are they too old for an au pair?

Au pairs can assist with tasks like driving, homework, and meal preparation. They can care for children during working hours, mornings, evenings, and most weekends so long as they do not provide care for more than 10 hours per day or 45 hours per week.

18. What happens if a child gets sick?

Au pairs can care for sick children.

19. Do au pairs get sick leave, vacation time, or other types of PTO?

Au pairs receive two weeks of paid vacation, one full weekend off per month, and one day and a half off each week. No other forms of PTO are included.

20. Can an au pair come with us on vacation?

Au pairs can travel with host families, and arrangements depend on whether the au pair has childcare responsibilities during the trip. Families can also request the au pair take vacation when the family is traveling.

21. I've looked into this before, but I didn't find an agency to work with. What am I missing?

State department rules require a local counselor within 60 minutes of an au pair's placement. Not all agencies have a representative for every area. There are at least two agencies (Eur Au Pair and Au Pair International) currently serving Purdue families.

22. How do I choose an au pair?

Au pairs go through State Department-approved agencies. Families review profiles, interview, and select an au pair. The matching process is mutual, requiring agreement from both the au pair and the host family.