

## Are You Ready For An Au Pair?

When considering options for child care many families enjoy the cultural opportunities in sponsoring an au pair. The experience can be rich and rewarding for all parties and most participants are very satisfied. The au pair program is governed by strict regulations from the US Department of State. These regulations might seem burdensome but are designed to protect everyone involved. Before undertaking the responsibility of being a host family, take a moment to understand your rights and responsibilities.

**What Is Expected From the Au Pair?** When you act as a host family you are guaranteed certain things. You will host a foreign national who:

- is between the ages of 18 and 26
- will provide in-house child care services to a maximum of 10 hours per day or 45 hours per week (30 hours per week for EduCare participants)
- is proficient in spoken English
- has a high school diploma
- has received at least 8 hours of child safety and 24 hours of child development instruction including CPR, stress management, and shaken baby syndrome
- has at least 200 hours of documented child care experience (if children under 2 years of age are in the home)
- has specific experience and training for special needs children (if special needs children are in the home)
- will complete at least six hours of academic credit

The ultimate goal of the program is cultural enrichment. The participant is expected to share her language, her cuisine, her traditions or other aspects of her heritage.

**What Is Expected From the Host Family?** The host family is expected to provide basic room and board which includes:

- a private bedroom
- meals
- a weekly wage tied to the Federal minimum wage
- time off including one and a half days per week, a full weekend each month, and two weeks' vacation per year
- the first \$500 (\$1000 for EduCare) of educational expenses

Cultural exchange works both ways. The host family will include the au pair in common family activities such as meals, social engagements, and vacations.

**What an Au Pair Is NOT** Finally, it is important to the success of the program and ultimate satisfaction of all parties to appreciate the limits of the arrangement. The person in your home is not a nanny and often, unless caring for children under the age of 2, does not have child care experience. Although she has basic training in first aid or CPR, she is not a nurse. The single most important thing to understand is that an au pair is not a servant or an employee. She is to be treated as an equal, as a member of the family, and nothing less. With a clear understanding of the purpose and boundaries of the program, this can be a wonderful cultural opportunity for your children and your w

## About the Author

Author is a freelance copywriter. For more information on having or becoming an au pair, please visit <http://www.eurapair.com>

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