

Our information pack contains suggestions on settling in, ideas and advice for looking after children and guidance on an au pair's role.

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[Contact telephone numbers](#)

At the end of these pages we have listed your host family's telephone numbers and our contact numbers. Please keep this information with you at all times. We suggest you take some 10p, 20p and 50p coins with you whenever you go out just in case you need to use a telephone box.

[Settling in](#)

Feeling homesick – It normally takes at least a couple of weeks to settle in so do not worry if you feel a little homesick at first. To take your mind off your sadness keep yourself busy. Try going for walks in the local area, speak to us about contacting other au pairs who live near to you and arrange to meet them, ask the children if you can borrow one of their books to read to practise your English, ask the family if they are members of the local library and if they are go there and see if there are any books, music or videos you would like to borrow. You can also email family and friends free of charge from library computers.

Finding things to do will help you settle in and it will give you lots more to write about in your letters and emails to your family and friends.

Understanding people - If you are having difficulty understanding what people are saying ask them to speak more slowly and to repeat what they have just said. Do not be hard on yourself about this as you are learning a new language after all.

Socializing – You may become lonely if you do not go out and meet people. One of the best places to make new friends is at college so make sure you are enrolled on a course as soon as possible. We have telephone numbers for other au pairs in all areas of South East London and Kent. If you would like to get in touch with other au pairs please let us know and we will arrange this.

Mealtimes – Make sure you take the majority of your meals with the family. This is an excellent opportunity for you to practice your English and to learn more about your host family and their way of life. They will also be interested to learn about you and your home life. They will of course understand if you would like your privacy once in a while and we ask you to respect their wishes if they choose to have the occasional meal alone. Please do not eat in your room without first asking permission.

Use of the telephone – Please check if and when you can use your host family's telephone. Check how early in the morning and how late in the evening you can receive non-urgent telephone calls. Make sure you write this information down and always adhere to it. Remember to tell your family and friends what times they can call you. Let them know the best times to call, ideally when you are not working, so you can chat with them for longer. In England international and mobile telephone calls are extremely expensive so please be careful not to make unnecessary calls.

Concerns – Telephone us if you have any problems that you are concerned about. A small problem that is left unresolved may turn into a larger problem! No problem is too small to talk to us about especially if it is causing you concern.

[Your Timetable](#)

We will send you a blank timetable for you to fill in with your weekly hours. We suggest you sit down with your host family and ask them to run through the hours they would like you to work and on which days then together you can complete the attached timetable. Keep the timetable in an easily visible place such as taped onto the fridge. Your hours may not be the same every week so please be prepared to be flexible. You should be able to find a language course that fits in with your work hours. Your host family will help you find the right course at the nearest college.

Looking after children

Play – most fun can be had when playing with children. Find out from the children and their parents what activities they enjoy doing so you know how best to entertain them. Most children enjoy a variety of activities both indoors and outdoors. Going to the local park, library, swimming pool, playing games at home, reading stories, painting pictures, doing jigsaws and cooking are some ideas of things you can do with the children to keep them entertained.

Going Out – Please hold young children's hands at all times whether on the path or crossing the road. Never cross the road near parked vehicles. Always cross the road at zebra crossings (black & white stripes painted across the road) or pelican crossings (traffic lights showing red and green men to indicate when safe to cross). If these are not available take extra care and cross where you can be seen by oncoming traffic especially when using a pushchair, pram or buggy.

The Park – This is a fun place to go so you and the children can get some fresh air and exercise. Please remember to stay close to the children when they are on swings, slides, and roundabouts or in paddling pools etc. If you are meeting friends in the park remember that you are working so keep watching the children at all times. Explain to the children that they must not talk to strangers and for your own safety we recommend you do not talk to stranger either.

Evening babysitting – Follow the children's usual bedtime routine and once they are in bed check on them at regular intervals. We suggest every hour on the hour, as it is easier to remember when you last checked when the parents ask you.

Food – Make sure you find out what foods the children are not allowed or can only have in moderation such as sweets, nuts, fizzy drinks etc.

Allergies - Ask the parents if their children are allergic to anything or have a bad reaction to certain types of food, drink or insect bites and stings. Also ask the parents what signs you should look for and what should be done if a child shows signs of an allergy flaring up. Write down what allergies the children have and also what you have to do if so you do not forget.

Safety

Here are some important guidelines for looking after the children in your care. The most important thing to remember is:

Watch children carefully at all times

NEVER let yourself be distracted from watching the children.

Never leave the children unattended. If you need to do something somewhere else please either take the children with you or ask the parents to look after the children for a moment. Always wait until you have heard their reply. Most accidents happen when "someone was supposed to be watching the children" so do not assume the parents have heard your request.

Bath time - Never leave children in the bath unattended. If the telephone or doorbell rings do not answer them. The caller will call back and will certainly understand why you did not answer their call. Make sure you get bath toys and towels ready before the children get into the bath.

Dangerous items - such as medicines, pills, matches, knives, scissors etc. should be kept out of sight and in a high place where children cannot reach. Better still lock these items away in your case and keep the

key hidden. We suggest you ask the parents if there is a special place you can put dangerous things, they will appreciate your being so careful.

Small objects – fascinate young children. Remember babies and toddlers can easily choke on them. Young children will put things into their mouth, ears or nose so please be vigilant at all times, moving small objects out of reach, even if you are off duty.

The British Law – During your working hours please make sure that children in your care who are under the age of 14 years are not left on their own. If a child in your care is left alone and comes to any harm you could be guilty of a criminal offence according to the Law of the United Kingdom. The police could prosecute you and send you home with a criminal record.

Disciplining the children

NEVER smack children – Never smack a child in your care even if the parents do or they tell you that you are allowed to.

Problems with the children – If the children do not do what you say or are rude to you please tell their parents so they can discipline them. Please do not think this will reflect badly on you. It is important that the children understand they must do as they are asked.

If the parents are not there when the children are playing up, try sending the children to their bedroom telling them you will speak to their parents when they get home. Do not shout at the children always talk to them. Suggested ways to stop children misbehaving are talk to them about what they are doing and why it is wrong and tell them that if they do not stop they will not be allowed to do something they like to do. This can be what they are currently doing or something they are going to do later that day or the next day. Examples are watch television, play computer games, go outside, have their sweets or biscuits etc. Make sure you carry this warning out if they continue to misbehave.

You should also telephone the parents to ask for their advice. Unless the children are in their rooms please always stay with the children so they do not come to any harm.

Au Pair guidelines

Your room – This is your own private place in the host family's home. Please remember that children do not always understand this so be patient with them and teach them to knock if they want to come in. Knocking when you go into their bedrooms is encouraged and this can be introduced as a game. It will show your mutual respect for their privacy. If a child knocks on your door when you are not meant to be looking after them please do not ignore them just in case there is an emergency downstairs. If they just want to see you then explain that you are very busy or tired so they can learn that you need time to yourself.

Your Friends – Once you have been here for a short while you are bound to make new friends. When you want to invite these friends to visit you in your new home please always check with the parents before inviting your friends to the house. Do not be surprised if for their first visit you are asked to invite your friends to the house when the parents are at home. Most families ask to meet their au pairs friends as it can be very uncomfortable having strangers visiting your home when you are not there. Parents also like to get to know all the people that their children will be meeting.

Please remember to check with the parents whenever you plan to invite friends to the house for the evening. Make sure you ask what time the parents are happy for your guests to stay until and ensure your friends do not leave later than agreed.

Tidy up after yourself – Whether you are working or not, always clear up after yourself. Please do not leave clearing up until later. Make sure you tidy up straight away, especially the kitchen, bathroom or sitting room.

Personal hygiene – Find out the best times for you to use the bathroom in the mornings and evenings so you can have an uninterrupted relaxing bath or quick shower. Also ask when would be the best time for you to use the washing machine for your weekly washing.

Listen to parent's requests – If you do not understand or cannot remember something you have been told please ask. Ask again if need be until you know exactly what you are being asked to do.

Communication – This is the main reason problems arise between a family and their au pair. Talk to the family about any problems you may have and be prepared to listen when they tell you about their problems. Using the wrong word to describe something may lead to a misunderstanding so do not react straight away if something that is said upsets or offends you. Ask the person to repeat what they have said using different words so you can make sure you have understood them clearly.

Politeness – Always be polite saying please and thank you and when you are coming in or going out make sure you say hello and goodbye. If you are getting a drink or snack for you, remember to offer to make one for others in the house.

Consideration for others – When playing music or watching television in your room you may wish to ask the family if they can hear you. You can then adjust the volume accordingly. Please do not walk about the house in a towel, your underwear or just in your nightdress or pyjamas. Please wear your clothes or a dressing gown at all times.

Privacy – Remember respect for people's privacy works both ways. Never give out details about the family, their home or their whereabouts just as you would not expect them to give details about you to others. Also you will need some time to yourself and may want to be left alone in your room. The parents will also need time to themselves to relax and talk to each other. It will not always be that you both need your own space at the same time so please be flexible and considerate about this.

Late nights out – Please try to avoid going out late when you have to work the next morning. For your own safety always let the family know where you are going and what time you expect to be home. Do not see this as being checked up on or having to ask permission. If you were at home with your parents you would do the same, so please give your host family the same courtesy. When you arrive home please come in quietly as others may have already gone to bed and NEVER invite anyone in without first obtaining your host family's permission.

Security – Please ensure you secure the family home whenever you go out. Make sure all windows are closed and external doors locked. If there is a burglar alarm make sure you remember to set it. NEVER tell anyone about the house, it's address, contents or security system. Do not give out the home telephone number without first asking permission from your host family.

Your personal safety

Being safe – We suggest you avoid using a mobile phone in public places and you do not carry a lot of money or your personal documents unless you are going to use them. In England you are not required to carry any I.D. with you.

Out and About

- Late at night, stay in well lit streets.
- Do not go into parks after dusk.
- Only take taxi's from taxi offices or when booked over the telephone. Ask your host family for the telephone number of their local taxi firm.
- When in Central London only use black taxis. You call them by waiving at them as they drive past. An orange light on the roof and in the front passenger window indicates that the taxi is available for hire.

Home Alone

- Never answer the door to the family home unless you know who is calling. Call out first to check it is indeed the person you are expecting. If it is not, DO NOT open the door.
- In emergencies dial 999 for help from Police, Ambulance or Fire brigade services

If there is anything written here that you do not understand please telephone or email us and we will be happy to clarify things for you.

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Host family telephone numbers

Home telephone Number:

Mothers Work:

Mobile:

Fathers Work:

Mobile:

Childcare Unlimited telephone numbers

During Office Hours: **020 8466 7658**
(Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm)

Out of Office Hours Emergency mobile number: 07956 126 466