

A.P.EX. - *ProAuPair*

# 9 Mistakes

Parents Make When  
Hiring an Au Pair...

And How to Avoid Them !

by Susan Asay, Host Mom, Founder & President of A.P.EX. ProAuPair





Dear future Host Parents,

If someone asked you to name your greatest accomplishment in life, you would immediately think about your children. Right? No matter how prestigious your career might be, your children are and always will be the best thing you have ever achieved. Unfortunately, your "greatest accomplishment" doesn't help pay the bills. No matter how much you love your kids (and as parents ourselves, we know you can't even quantify that amount) it doesn't magically free you from your other responsibilities. In fact, you added more chaos to your life the moment that first child arrived.

Now, like millions of other parents, you've found yourself trying to juggle your career, the demands of life, and your children. And it feels like your children are what you neglect the most. That's why you've been searching desperately for the perfect solution. And hiring an Au Pair - bringing someone in your home who can offer your child the consistent, loving care you wish you could - seems like a great solution.

**But wait!**

Before you take that first step, you need to realize that hiring an Au Pair is not as simple as finding a babysitter for a weekend date. This is a life-changing experience. But far too many parents rush the hiring process and inadvertently shake up their home life, make their children and the Au Pair unhappy, or, worse yet, even put their children in danger.

However, once you understand the risks...and the benefits...you will be prepared to welcome an Au Pair into your home and create a wonderful home environment where everyone feels loved, appreciated, comfortable, and safe.

I hope you enjoy this paper and I look forward to hear back from you about your experience, if you found my advise helpful or what your biggest mistake was and what you learned from it.

We hope to hear from you soon,

Warm regards,

*Susan Asay*

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Susan Asay with children Mika and Klaus



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## How I Learned the “9 Mistakes” the Hard Way – and How My Experiences Will Prevent You From Making the Same Errors

With the birth of my first child, Klaus, in 2005, I involuntarily started my journey to become *The Expert* in hiring childcare providers. Like many of you, we did not have family living close by and qualified Nannies were difficult to find. Day care was not an option, because we needed flexible hours. Besides, I was not comfortable leaving my tiny baby in the hands of strangers. However, becoming a stay-at-home mother was not an option either.

So, in a short amount of time, I tried all five child care options: (1) Relatives, (2) Nannies, (3) Regular Au Pairs, (4) Daycare, (5) and Professional Au Pairs and learned the hard way what worked best for our family in different situations.

In the end, I discovered that hiring a professional Au Pair is a fantastic solution for many reasons (which is why I am writing this report). But even that knowledge didn't come easily. Hopefully, as you read through the mistakes I made, you will learn how to skip the drama and successfully hire a professional Au Pair your entire family will love. Without further ado, let me introduce you to my mistakes:

### **Mistake 1 - Underestimating the power of risk management in childcare**

Childcare makes or breaks a working mom's career. If you're stressed about your child's well-being, you can't focus on your job. Being confident that your child is in a safe, loving, and stimulating environment frees up your mind so you can excel in the workplace.

Consider the following situation:

A working mother was asked to participate in a two-day event. It required two long days of on-site work (from 8:00 am to midnight both days), keeping her away from her 4 month old baby.

**On the first day...** the woman called her sitter



to check on the baby. “Oh, he's okay,” came the reply. “I'm just outside rocking him because he was crying.”

“Why was he crying?” the woman asked.

“Well, he was rolling around and hit his head on the couch.”

“He's 4 months old,” the woman practically screamed, “he doesn't roll around.”

At the end of the day, the woman discovered: her son had been left alone with other children while the sitter used the restroom, accidentally went unfed for 6 hours, and was never laid down for a nap. After that first day, this woman was ready to cancel her work obligation (and the substantial pay) to stay at home with her baby.

### **On the second day (with a different sitter)...**

a text message reached the woman mid-morning. The text included a picture of her smiling baby and this message:

*Fed, changed, and ready for his nap.*

Throughout the day, the woman received updates and picked up a peacefully sleeping baby at the end of her very busy day. Not surprisingly, the woman accomplished *almost twice as much work* on the second day.

The *only* way to successfully balance work and family is to work when it's time to work and be home when it's time to be home. Knowing your children are safe and protected allows you to divide your time effectively.

When looking for an Au Pair, don't hire anyone until you can feel 100% confident leaving your child in their hands. Which leads us to the next mistake...

## **Mistake 2 - Not knowing what to ask for**

In your mind, consciously and *thoroughly* answer the following question before you continue reading:

### **What are you looking for in a professional Au Pair?**

Did you answer the question? Well, what did you come up with? Keep your answers in your mind and let's see if I can't add a few ideas you haven't thought of yet:

- Does your professional Au Pair need driving experience?
- Does your professional Au Pair need experience with infants or toddlers?
- Do you expect your professional Au Pair to know CPR?
- What personality type would work well with you, your spouse and your children?
- What special needs experience would be very helpful for your family?

Okay, now be honest with yourself, did any of those ideas come to your mind when you thought about what you were looking for?

Probably not. And those are some very important questions. But don't beat yourself up. If you've never had experience with this before, you wouldn't have considered how specific you can and should be. This is not like choosing a babysitter. You don't have to choose whoever is available. You can wait until you find the perfect fit for your family.

Remember, while you will be welcoming a new family member, you are also the employer. Your

professional Au Pair is coming into your home to help you. It's okay to be specific about what you're looking for. Preparing a thorough questionnaire for your candidate's interview and writing a detailed job description can help you identify what's important for your family. Ask us for our Interview Guide for Host Families. It's free and a great resource for you.

## **Mistake 3 - Not understanding the differences between Regular Au Pair, Professional Au Pair, and a Nanny**

Throughout this report, I've been using the term "professional Au Pair". You may have noticed. And now, you know I'm doing it for a reason. It's because the terms Au Pair, professional Au Pair, and nanny cannot be used interchangeably. They are different and not knowing those differences could really cause a problem for you, your family, and the person you hire.

Your expectations should match your reality, so let's prevent any mistakes right now by showing you the differences:

A nanny – a full time childcare provider who is typically from the same country/location as their employer. They can live with the family they work for or maintain their own home. They typically make more money than Au Pairs and are more independent.

Au Pair - "Au Pair" is French for "on par," signifying that this international visitor is to be treated like a member of the family. Several US department of State designated agencies match young women looking for a way to visit the U.S. with families looking for inexpensive live-in child care. The difference between a Regular Au Pair and a Professional Au Pair include:

- Regular Au Pairs have limited child care experience with approximately 200-400 hours in babysitting. Regular Au Pairs are ideal for assisting stay-at-home moms with busy schedules.

Professional AuPair Sarah, 25,  
German Occupational Therapist  
with her host children



- Professional Au Pairs hold a degree in a child care related field such as pediatric nursing, pre-school teaching, special needs education, or occupational therapy and/or they've had two years of full time child care experience.

Because you're reading this report, you believe a professional Au Pair is the best solution for your family. But if any of these definitions surprised you, then it's time to do some more research. So put this report to the side (to be read later) and check out more information about professional Au Pairs on our website: [www.proaupair.com](http://www.proaupair.com).

#### **Mistake 4 - Hiring an Au Pair without prior experience in caring for children in your kids' age group**

As you are quickly discovering, every stage of your child's life brings with it new experiences. And new lessons to be learned. If you didn't know the importance of holding a newborns head before... you do now. If you haven't had the chance to potty train a child before...just wait for it. And introducing your child to solid foods is always a new adventure.

You are the parent. If there are things for you to learn, you'll learn them. But hiring a regular Au Pair

– with zero experience in your child's age group – makes no sense. You are hiring someone to help you care for your children, not *learn* how to care for your children.

Do not expect a regular Au Pair to take on 45 hours per week of sole child care responsibilities without intensive 2-3 months intensive training in your home. Here is what could happen:

- You receive dozens of phone calls with your Au Pair asking questions
- Your child's basic needs (food, dress, naps, play, diaper changing, etc) go unmet
- You spend your evenings soothing your child and fixing mistakes the Au Pair made during the day
- Serious concerns (such as fevers or injuries) go undetected or are allowed to go untreated

Some people say that child care is instinctual. And chances are, nothing bad would happen to your child if they're left in the care of an inexperienced Au Pair. But do you really want to take that chance? Do you want to invite someone into your home, pay them a weekly stipend, and take that chance?

#### **Mistake 5 - Not Using Video Conferencing During the Candidate Interview**

There's something to be said for face-to-face conversations. No matter how great someone looks on paper (and/or in photos), you and I both know that it takes a physical meeting to really get to know someone.

Think of it like this...someone is moving into your home for the next 6 months to a year. Are you okay if:

- They have a very loud (or very soft) voice
- They're shy and don't look you in the eyes
- They have a serious (or silly) disposition
- Their accent is a little heavy and its difficult to understand them at first

Guess what? The Au Pair wants to know the very same things about you. They are leaving their family and friends to move into the home of a



complete stranger. They would like to know if you're a jokester or more reserved. They're curious about the level of noise that can be expected in your home.

If you don't connect face-to-face, you might miss some very critical details that could make or break your successful year.

Video conferencing is easy, fast, and free. It gives you a chance to connect with your candidates on a personal level. That way you can choose the candidate that "feels" like the best fit for your family. You can learn more about how to set up a successful video interview in our Host Family guide, just ask us for your free copy.

### **Mistake 6 - Failing to realize that a drivers license doesn't equal driving experience**

Warning, warning, warning!

Okay, this one doesn't take a lot of explanation. Do not assume an Au Pair, who has a driver's license, is an experienced and safe driver. If your Au Pair will be driving your kids, ask specific questions about his/her experience and (recent) frequency of driving.

Even if there is no reason for your Au Pair to drive



**Professional AuPair Monika, 25,  
Austrian Pediatric Nurse with host child**

your kids, you still need to know about their skill level. Your Au Pair will likely need to borrow the car to get to school and to meet friends. After all, they are your guest, not your prisoner. They'll want to get out of the house frequently. Also, most insurance companies give you a better rate for an experienced driver than someone who just got their drivers license.

### **Mistake 7 - Making assumptions about your Au Pair's personality and your own without scientific analysis**

Have you ever met someone, felt like you really connected, and then found out down the road that you can't stand the person? It's not that your initial impression was wrong. It's usually just a few habits that start to drive you crazy.

The same is true when choosing a professional Au Pair. Let's be realistic about this...when you first connect with your Au Pair, and even for the first few weeks, you're on your very best behavior. And so are they! But what happens when you reach a certain comfort level and the "real" you or the "real" Au Pair emerge?

Well, if you've done your homework, then things just get better. Once the familiarity sets in, your professional Au Pair really becomes a member of the family. That's why you need to go through a thorough scientific analysis. Learn why you do things the way you do! Understanding your own personality and the personality of your Au Pair is a critical component in the matching process. You can take your free personality analysis here <http://proaupair.com/personality-analysis/>.

### **Mistake 8 – Not considering the emotional needs of their Au Pair**

Anna, a 25 year old occupational Therapist from Germany interviewed with ProAuPair families for 4 months until she found her perfect host family. She started in November and asked her host family if her boyfriend could visit for Christmas.

The host family wanted to accommodate their Au Pair as much as possible, since she did an outstanding job with their special needs daughter.

Professional AuPair Sarah, 22,  
German Pre-School and Kindergarten  
Teacher tutoring host child



They honored the request and Anna's boyfriend stayed for three weeks over the holidays.

When the boyfriend returned home, Anna called us, her agency, in tears and wanted to go home as well. She missed her boyfriend so much and was so homesick. Because she had spent most of her free time skyping home and with the boyfriend, she did not make new friends locally.

As a host family, you need to realize that this is a person coming to join you. Not just an employee. They should be treated like a member of the family and encouraged to build relationships with other local Americans there age while undertaking this experience.

Before hiring an Au Pair, be extra diligent about questioning an Au Pair with a significant other if he/she will be ok to stay for the 12 months term.

At ProAuPair, we create guidelines and advice like: no visitors for at least the first 4 months while the Au Pair makes friends. Furthermore, we ask our Au Pairs to present a plan on how to handle homesickness when it hits, and give them ideas and suggestions.

You can check out our "How to deal with my Homesickness" video for our candidates here: <http://proaupair.com/au-pair-homesickness/>.

In this particular case, we worked with the host

family and Au Pair to find a replacement. We were able to send a new candidate with Occupational Therapy background to the family within six weeks and she now is already in her second year with the same happy family.

### **Mistake 9 - Depriving yourself of excellent candidates because you started your search too late**

What is too late? There are noteworthy differences in the hiring and job seeking process between Europe and the USA.

I'll give you a comparison I'm very familiar with... In the US you can interview for a job and start the following week. In Germany, once you interview for a job, it can take up to a year before you can start. In the US you can give your notice and leave today. When you can quit your job in Germany, you need to give your notice from 1 month up to 6 months before you actually leave (due to labor laws and contractual agreements). Also, all employees have a written work contract where in the US most people work "at will" without a written employment contract.

While differences like these may protect you from an Au Pair who will "jump ship", it also requires you to allow more time to find and hire your preferred and qualified candidate.

Furthermore, you need to consider the amount of time it takes an Au Pair to be accepted into one of our programs. At ProAuPair, we do background checks, meet them in person, speak to their teacher and employers, get driving records, and even a full medical check before the candidate is even ready for an interview with you.

Once you start searching Au Pair candidates, it could take several weeks or months before you find that "perfect fit". In the meantime, you're trying to make daycare centers and babysitters work for your family.

So start early! Create your Family Profile now! <http://proaupair.com/start-family-profile/>.



## How to Guarantee You'll Hire a Professional Au Pair Who Fits Your Family

Luckily for my family, nothing terrible happened while I searched for the best child care solution. We were able to find the help we needed and our children have been well cared for. But it was my own journey that made me realize how taxing the Au Pair hiring process can be. And how ill-prepared most families are to undertake such a solution.

I know how time consuming and difficult it can be to find the right person to care for your children. That's what led me to found A.P.EX. ProAuPair with three professional programs:

1. Infant & Toddler Care Program
2. Kids 2+ Care Program
3. Special Needs Care Program

If hiring a professional Au Pair is the right choice for you, then you should follow these steps:

1. Begin your search 3-9 months in advance of the date you will need your Au Pair to start.
2. Choose an agency that understands your needs and the unique needs of your family. (ProAuPair is the first and only agency in the US to offer a dedicated Special Needs Live-In Child Care Au Pair Program.)
3. Build a relationship with your preferred candidate.

Would you love to mitigate the risk that your child care selection may not work out and prevent that you have to start all over again?

ProAuPair is a leading agency for matching professional Au Pairs with special families... like yours.

And you can get started today by:

**Contacting us at (949) 903-2348 or (949) 545-8191 to set up a free consultation**

**Or**

**Starting your application & Creating your Family Profile now!**

**<http://proaupair.com/start-family-profile/>**

Consider your child care concerns solved! We look forward to hearing from you. And remember, the sooner you take action, the sooner your family can get back on track!

Warm regards,  
Susan Asay  
President & Founder  
A.P.EX. ProAuPair



Professional AuPair Larissa, 23,  
German Pre-School & Kindergarten Teacher  
with the Asay Host Family



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*Disclosure:*

*The Department of State does not define "special needs" and makes clear that host families, and not Au Pair sponsors, must identify their child's special needs and must make the selection of an Au Pair based on their evaluation of the Au Pair's skills, education, or training. An Au Pair is not to replace needed health care of other special care of education providers (therapists, teachers, etc.).*

