



Cultural Care
Au Pair



Choosing the right childcare

11 important questions to ask yourself
before making a decision.

Finding the right childcare provider for your children is a big decision.

You want quality childcare that stimulates and nurtures your children, gives you peace of mind and doesn't break the bank. We've listed the types of options that are available as well as 11 questions to ask yourself to help determine which one is the best fit for you. We recommend staying open to options you may never have considered before—you might be surprised to discover what kind of childcare works best for your family!

Here are the childcare options widely available to American families:



Center-based daycare

Childcare provided by a state-regulated center in a group setting; individual childcare workers' education and training requirements vary by setting and state.

Family daycare

Childcare provided by individuals in the providers' own home; required to have a state health and safety license.

Au pair

A young adult from overseas who joins a family for up to two years to provide childcare; all Cultural Care au pairs are screened, trained and American Heart Association-certified in adult and pediatric CPR/AED and First Aid.



Nanny

An individual who cares for children in a family; may or may not be formally trained. Screening may or may not be done for you.

Nanny share

An individual who cares for children from more than one family; may or may not be formally trained. Screening may or may not be done for you.

Family coverage

Childcare provided by a family member like a grandparent or sibling (also referred to as "kith and kin" care); may or not be formally trained.

"Working parents are busy people. We're living in a 24/7 economy and parents are weighing the costs, the accessibility, and the quality of childcare arrangements in their area when they're making their childcare decisions."

Smith, Kristin, family demographer at University of New Hampshire's Carsey Institute.
"Workers Vote With Feet, Leave Home-Based Child Care." New Hampshire Public Radio.
New Hampshire Public Radio, 21 Nov. 2013. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.

1. What is your weekly budget for childcare?

Cost is a big factor in the childcare search. The amount families must spend for quality care varies widely depending on their location, hours needed, and a caregiver's duties, experience, education and special skills or training. Our first recommendation is to review your income and expenses and calculate a figure that feels comfortable to invest. (That's right—it's helpful to consider childcare an investment, rather than an expense; after all, the right care will provide peace of mind, the ability for you to continue your career and early education for your children.) Once you've determined what you can spend, it's time to take a look at the cost of these six childcare options to see what fits within your budget.



CENTER-BASED DAYCARE

The cost of center-based daycare varies so widely, largely based on where you live, so it's very hard to give an average cost. Generally, daycare facilities cost less than hiring a full-time nanny, but are about the same or even more expensive when compared to au pair childcare or a nanny share.

Just to give you an idea of how wide the cost range is, consider this: in Massachusetts, the average annual cost of full-time care for one infant is \$20,125; in Indiana, it's almost half of that (\$11,949).¹ Keep in mind that daycare centers charge per child—so if you've got more than one, your costs could potentially double. The best way to get pricing for center-based daycare is to call places local to you.

¹Fraga, Lynette et al. "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2017 Report." Child Care Aware of America. 03 Nov. 2013. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.



FAMILY DAYCARE

Home daycares are typically less expensive than center-based daycare—20% cheaper on average for full-time care for one infant and one 4-year-old, according to Child Care Aware of America. The best way to get pricing for family daycare is to call around to places local to you.

²Kendall, Rosemary and Wood, Stephen. "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2013 Report." Child Care Aware of America. 03 Nov. 2013. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.



AU PAIR

The cost of an au pair is the easiest to calculate because it is largely a fixed amount. Au pairs are paid a weekly stipend of \$195.75⁴. In addition to this stipend paid directly to the au pair, families pay fees to one of 14 legal au pair agencies in the U.S. At Cultural Care Au Pair, fees cover the recruitment and screening of your au pair, her training at our Au Pair Training School (including American Heart Association certification in adult and pediatric CPR/AED and First Aid), the matching services of a dedicated matching specialist, host family and au pair orientations, your au pair's round-trip international airfare, her medical and travel insurance and year-long support from Cultural Care office staff and your local childcare consultant. All agency fees are similar; Cultural Care Au Pair charges a \$75 registration fee, a \$300 processing fee and a \$8,695 program fee.

If you add these fees together, the total annual cost is \$19,053.25 (about \$389/week based on 49 weeks of childcare). A unique advantage to the au pair program is that the cost is the same, regardless of how many children you have. To learn more about the cost of hosting an au pair, we suggest visiting Cultural Care Au Pair's website: culturalcare.com/pricing.

³According to U.S. Department of State regulations and Cultural Care Au Pair. ⁴The weekly stipend is determined by the U.S. Department of State using a formula based on the federal minimum wage. Any change in the federal minimum wage will result in an increase in the stipend.



NANNY

According to the International Nanny Association 2013 Nanny Salary and Benefits Survey, full-time nannies in the United States earn on average about \$700 per week. However, a nanny's salary will vary quite a bit depending on your location, hours needed, and a nanny's duties, experience, education and special skills or training.

⁵Haltzman, Ed. "2013 International Nanny Association Salary and Benefits Survey." International Nanny Association. 11 Aug. 2013. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.



NANNY SHARE

Sharing a nanny is one way to mitigate the often high cost of quality nannies. Although there is no formal research on the cost of a nanny share, according to care.com, you can generally expect to pay about the same or a little more than you would pay for quality daycare. Anecdotal information on parenting websites suggest that each family pay a shared nanny about 2/3 the cost of what they would pay if it was just for one family. If you use this figure and the average weekly nanny salary of \$700¹² to calculate the average cost of a nanny share you get: \$700 x .67 = \$470 per week per family.

⁶Anecdotal information on parenting websites & Haltzman, Ed. "2013 International Nanny Association Salary and Benefits Survey." International Nanny Association. 11 Aug. 2013. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.



FAMILY COVERAGE

If you're lucky enough to have family in the area to help out, this is one of the least expensive childcare options available. Parents who rely on family members, often grandparents or siblings, to care for their children often pay them at least minimum wage in their state as it helps to formally define and underline the seriousness of the commitment.

⁷Based on a 45-hour work week; the highest minimum wage in the U.S. (\$9.32 in Washington) x 45 hours = \$419.40.

"The largest financial commitment that many new parents make is also the most emotional: choosing a full-time caregiver for your child as you head back to work. As many parents know all too well, it's a giant expense, often second only to housing costs."

Siegel Bernard, Tara. "Choosing Child Care When You Go Back to Work." **The New York Times.** The New York Times Company, 22 Nov. 2013. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.

2. Which is more important to you: socialization or the ability to choose a caregiver who provides one-on-one attention?

Daycare centers provide the opportunity for children to interact with others; but they lack the one-on-one, consistent care an au pair or nanny provide. Au pairs and nannies act as a consistent presence and provide one-on-one attention but there is less opportunity for socialization. With a nanny share or family daycare, your children are at least spending time with one (or a few) more children. And families with their own au pairs or nannies can set up opportunities for socialization through playgroups and playdates but it takes more effort.

Another important difference to recognize between daycare centers and other childcare options is that if you choose daycare, you can't be as picky about who your children are spending their time with. Most parents at least meet with the teachers at daycare centers they are considering but there is no guarantee that those teachers will be the ones caring for your children. It is well documented that the turnover rate for the daycare center workforce is very high—within a year, an average of 30% of teachers and assistants leave their jobs.⁸ It's also worth noting that daycare teachers' backgrounds and experience vary considerably based on what education and training requirements the center and the state you live in require.

With an au pair or nanny, you can be much more particular about what kind of person is taking care of your little ones. And, in the case of an au pair, you can also rest assured that candidates have already been screened and trained. [Cultural Care's pool of available au pairs](#) includes hundreds of candidates who are pre-screened—all have undergone criminal background checks, personality profiles, personal interviews and reference checks. All Cultural Care au pairs have childcare experience (at least 200 hours; in most cases many more), and they all complete a 4-day training before arriving to your home, during which time they are American Heart Association-certified in adult and pediatric CPR and First Aid. (An au pair's screening and training is included in the program fee paid to the agency.) Most nanny agencies also screen their applicants as well as provide background checks and references. If you are searching for nannies yourself online, that responsibility will be largely yours.

⁸MacMillan, Meredith. "NAEYC Calls for Fair Compensation for the Early Childhood Workforce on Worthy Wage Day." National Association for the Education of Young Children. 01 May 2012. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.

3. How much flexibility do you want?

Are your childcare needs relatively consistent from week to week or is your schedule more unpredictable? This is an important question to ask because some childcare options accommodate unpredictable schedules better than others. Center-based and family daycares often have limited hours of operation—so consider whether these options will prove to be too rigid (or expensive—those late fees can add up!) for your work schedule. On the other hand, you can negotiate flexible hours with an au pair and with a nanny (who is willing). An au pair can work up to 45 hours a week (no more than 10 hours a day) on a schedule you customize from week to week. Au pairs can even provide overnight coverage and coverage in the evenings and on weekends just as long as they don't exceed their 45-hour/week, 10-hour/day limit and your requests are reasonable. Most nannies (especially those that live-out and those that are shared) want a schedule that is consistent from week to week, but they will often stay a little later or arrive earlier if you need wiggle room.



AU PAIR



FAMILY COVERAGE



NANNY



NANNY SHARE



FAMILY DAYCARE



CENTER-BASED DAYCARE

MOST FLEXIBLE ➤ LEAST FLEXIBLE



4. How important is convenience?

In an ideal scenario, your childcare solution won't add undue inconvenience to your already busy life. When considering daycares, make sure your options are close by (think of it like you would your gym—is it convenient enough that you can easily get there on your way to and from work?) If you want to skip the inconvenience and stress of pick-up and drop-offs altogether consider an au pair, nanny or willing family member.

It is also worth mentioning that compared with children who stay at home with mom, dad or another caregiver, babies who attend large daycare centers before age 2½ come down with more respiratory bugs and ear infections during their early preschool years.⁹ Another study estimates that parents who send an infant to daycare should expect him or her to fall ill an average of nine to ten times a year.¹⁰ If daycare is your preference it would be wise to think about a plan of action in case you end up with a sick child who needs to stay home. If you rely on an au pair, nanny or family member for coverage, you don't have to worry as much about your children getting sick, but what happens if your provider isn't feeling well? Nearly half of all families who employ nannies offer paid sick days and of those that do, most limit the number to five. Au pairs aren't allowed a designated number of sick days, but you will still need to pay them their weekly stipend and find someone else to watch the kids.

⁹Hurwitz ES, Gunn WJ, Pinsky PF, Schonberger LB. "Risk of respiratory illness associated with day care attendance: a nationwide study." Pediatrics. 1991; 8762-69. ¹⁰Loda, FA, Glezen, WP, Clyde WA Jr., "Respiratory disease in group day care." Pediatrics, Vol.49, 1972. pp.428-437. Print.

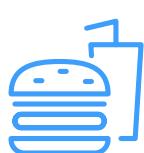
5. Could you use some help around the house? What about an extra driver? Or someone to help with homework?

Having a childcare provider who can pitch in on household duties is big bonus for many families. Of course, daycare centers can't help in that department but au pairs and nannies can be asked to help out at home. According to U.S. State Department guidelines, au pairs can be asked to help with household chores related to the children including laundry, meal preparation and room clean-up. As far as a nanny or family member goes, you can ask her to complete any household tasks she's willing to take on (although it may cost you more money). Au pairs, nannies and family members can also fill in as the family chauffeur and help school-aged kids with homework.

An au pair or nanny can offer household help:



LAUNDRY



MEAL PREP



ROOM
CLEAN-UP



DRIVING
DUTIES



HOMEWORK
ASSISTANCE



BEDTIME
ROUTINE

6. How soon do you need childcare?

Some childcare arrangements take a long time to set up while others can be made relatively quickly. So the number of options you have will depend on how soon you need care. If you are thinking of going the daycare center route, be aware that the best ones fill up quickly, and they can have extensive waiting lists—some as long as a year or more. Competition for spots is even more fierce for parents with infants and for those who live in urban areas. For this reason, it's a good idea to inquire and add your name to several lists early on even if you are still shopping around. Typically, there is less of a wait for a spot in a family-run daycare but those still have limited availability in many areas.

The time it takes for an au pair to arrive to your home will depend on the availability of candidates and your family's specific needs. In most cases, au pairs arriving from overseas can travel to your home as soon as eight to ten weeks after you register with an agency. For families who need immediate care, they may consider taking an au pair who is already in the country and going through a transition—meaning she has parted ways with her previous family and is looking for a new host family. In-country au pairs can arrive to a family's home in as little as three days.

If you are on the hunt for a nanny, finding the right match can happen quickly or it may take more time, depending on your needs. Using a reputable agency or online service and asking for recommendations from your network of friends and family will help speed the process along. Setting up a nanny share takes more time because in addition to finding the right nanny, you have to find a family who is close by, looking for the same hours of coverage, and who shares the same parenting philosophies you do. It's like fitting three pieces of a puzzle together versus two.

7. How much control do you want over your child's environment?

Are you impressed with the environment your local daycare centers or family daycare provide? Are you happy to leave the activity planning up to someone else? Are you okay with the fact that your child will be cared for by a variety of different people during the week? If you answered "yes", center-based or family daycare may be a good choice for you. A good daycare center should be able to provide a clean, safe environment and a well-rounded schedule of activities that your child will be doing during the week. The education and training requirements for daycare workers vary by state, but quality daycare centers have minimum requirements for staff including high school diploma, childcare experience and a clean criminal background check. (It's up to you to ensure the daycare center you choose has a strict screening policy in place.)

On the other hand, if you want a little more control over what your children are doing (and watching and listening to) and who your child's primary caregiver is, an au pair, nanny or family member may be a better fit. With an au pair or nanny, you can be as specific as you want to be about the activities your child is engaged in. Another advantage to someone caring for your children at home? Your kids can play, rest and eat in their own familiar environment.

"Spend the time to figure out what kind of care you need. The costs, advantages and disadvantages vary: day care, home-based center, live-in nanny, live-out nanny, nanny share, au pair, your mother, you. Take time to prioritize your wishes and your family's needs. Make a chart of costs and the pros and cons, to figure out which options are best for your family. Ask parents you respect for recommendations and visit several options. Finding good care is a process that's rarely accomplished within a few days or weeks. Accept that there is no "right" answer, and that your needs may change over time as your family grows and your work/kids juggling act evolves."

Morgan Steiner, Leslie. "Top 10 Tips for Finding the Right Child Care." **The Washington Post.**
The Washington Post Company, 05 May. 2008. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.



8. Are you interested in cultural exchange?

Does exposing your children to other cultures appeal to you? Are you hopeful that your child will one day learn another language? Is it important that your children learn sensitivity to other cultures and heritages? If you answered “yes” to all of these questions, recognize that the au pair program allows your children to experience all of these things right in their own home. Of course, there are other ways to raise culturally sensitive, multi-lingual children, but the advantage to accomplishing this through hosting an au pair is that it happens organically and at no extra cost to you. A nanny or nanny shares may also provide the opportunity for exposure to a different culture—it would be up to you to choose a provider with the right background.

9. Would live-in care be an acceptable option for your family?

While there are some families who welcome the idea of live-in help, a lot of parents will immediately say “no” to this question, opting instead for a live-out solution. Obviously, daycare centers and most nannies will satisfy a “live-out” criterion. The benefit of a live-out situation is that at the end of the day, you and your family have all the time alone you need and you don’t have to worry about another person’s feelings, habits and behavior.

However, if you are tempted to overlook in-home care, ask yourself why you would veto a live-in au pair or nanny. Is it because of lack of privacy? (Most au pairs and live-in nannies spend their free time with friends.) Is it because you think it will be “weird” to have a stranger living in your home? (After a short adjustment period, most families consider their live-in au pairs and nannies to be more like extended family members.) You may also want to take into account the many advantages that come with live-in care—more flexibility and convenience; another adult in the home; and the ability to carefully choose your ideal provider.

“Babies and young children have incredible early learning skills and are uniquely equipped to learn the building blocks of one or more languages starting at birth. This is an ideal time to introduce foreign languages to kids and to encourage cross-linguistic learning.”

Benasich, Dr. April. “What Scientists Say.” Little Pim. Little Pim Research, n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2014.



10. How willing are you to invest time into an employer/caregiver relationship?

This is an important point to consider, because if the answer is “not very”, neither an au pair nor a nanny will be the right option for you. Maintaining a good working relationship with an au pair or nanny requires regular communication and negotiation, and showing that you care about your au pair or nanny is an essential part of the deal. While you may consider a nanny to be your employee, an au pair by definition is “on par” or “equal to”, indicating that your au pair should be considered more like an extended family member. Au pairs require even more of a time investment because they need help adjusting to a new culture as well. (For this reason, the U.S. Department of State requires host parents to stay at home with their au pairs for the first three days after her arrival.) While the time investment is more involved with au pairs and nannies, the payoff can be worth it. If you decide to secure childcare coverage from a family member, the time commitment and emotional investment can be equally as involved.

11. Think about the ideal lifestyle you envision for your family—what does that look like and which childcare options support that?

This is the last, but perhaps most important question to ask yourself. Try to picture how each of the childcare solutions discussed would affect your life and imagine whether it would bring peace and harmony to your home or more stress and hardship. Forget about what your friends are doing for childcare or what is most popular in your community or within your circle of colleagues and really focus on what will work best for your needs. Do you know your demanding work schedule will make the drop-off and pick-up to and from daycare a nightmare? Consider an au pair or nanny. Do you love the idea of welcoming someone into your home to provide energy, one-on-one attention and exposure to a new language and culture? Maybe an au pair is best. Do you want the individualized attention but not the permanent house guest? Maybe a nanny or nanny share is best. Is it important to you that your child have the chance to play with others his age and you’ve identified quality daycare facilities near your home? Daycare might be the answer. Visualize, do your homework and ultimately trust your gut to choose what feels best for your family.

“As for what distinguishes good care from bad: One crucial factor is how caregivers interact with the kids. Are they responsive and sensitive? Do they get down on the floor with the children or are they always standing in the back, looking bored? Higher quality care also tends to have a higher ratio of adults per child, fewer children per group, and staff is typically more highly educated.”

Wenner Moyer, Melinda. “The Day Care Dilemma.” *Slate*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc., 27 Aug. 2013. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.

CHILDCARE QUIZ:

Which childcare solution is right for you?

1. What is your weekly budget for childcare?

- A. Based on where I live, a daycare center or family daycare would be the best financial solution
- B. Based on where I live, an au pair, or nanny share would be more affordable than daycare

2. Which is more important to you?

- A. Socialization for my child
- B. One-on-one attention and the ability to choose a specific caregiver

3. How much flexibility do you need?

- A. Little to none; my family's schedule doesn't change much
- B. The option to schedule coverage outside of traditional work hours would be a big benefit

4. How important is convenience?

- A. Not very—I'm not concerned about it
- B. Convenience is important to me

5. Could you use some help around the house? Or an extra driver? Or someone to help with homework?

- A. I don't really need any extra help
- B. A little bit of help with household chores would be beneficial

6. How soon do you need childcare?

- A. I've got plenty of time to figure it out
- B. I need someone in the next couple of months or less

7. How much control do you want over your child's environment?

- A. I'm happy leaving the daily activities and environment to someone else to worry about
- B. I prefer having more control over where my children are and what they're doing all day

8. Are you interested in cultural exchange?

- A. I could take it or leave it
- B. Yes, I would love to expose my children to a different culture

9. Would live-in care be an acceptable option for you?

- A. No. I don't have the room and/or a live-in just isn't for me.
- B. Yes, I would consider a live-in caregiver

10. How willing are you to invest time into an relationship with your caregiver?

- A. Not very; I don't have it in me to invest time and energy into another relationship in my life
- B. I would be willing to nurture a relationship with my caregiver if I thought it would benefit my family

If you scored mostly:

As

you are best suited to:



CENTER-BASED OR FAMILY DAYCARE

Your answers indicate that your family would benefit from securing childcare with a traditional center-based daycare or family daycare. Good luck finding a daycare solution that works well for you!

Bs

you are best suited to:



AU PAIR OR FAMILY COVERAGE

Your answers indicate that your family would benefit from inviting an au pair or family member to care for your children. To find out more about au pair childcare, visit: culturalcare.com. Good luck finding the perfect au pair or family member to welcome into your home!

As & Bs

you are best suited to:



NANNY OR NANNY SHARE

Your answers indicate that your family would benefit from hiring a nanny or nanny share. Good luck finding the perfect nanny candidate for your family! solution that works well for you!