

PREPARING AN APPLICATION FOR ACCEPTANCE ONTO THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUPAIR PROGRAM.

The South African Definition of an Au Pair

The South African Department of Home Affairs has put in place a cultural Exchange visa that allows foreign nationals between the ages of 18 and 24 to spend up to one year in South Africa as an aupair whilst living with a host family and participate directly in the home life of the host family while providing limited child-care services. A South African applicant of course does not require any visa to work as an aupair in South Africa.

The South African aupair program does not require any aupair to attend a language school and foreign nationals wishing to do so, must be willing to do so at their own expense. An au pair is expected to work from 25 to 45 hours per week and perform light housework related to the children for whom she cares. The au pair must be flexible about scheduling the hours she will provide childcare for the host family, because many of our host families consist of two working parents.

Completing your application.

The application should be filled out neatly. The application will give host families their first impression of an applicant, and it is important that this impression is a good impression. A legible, well thought-out, and well-written application is essential to an applicant's success in matching.

Host families have several au pair applications available to them. Most host families will look at multiple applications before offering the position to a particular applicant. The better the presentation of the application (neatness, thoroughness, etc.), the better your chance of having a family choose you. However, it is very important that you be conservative in your creativity with the applications.

It is important to note that placement of an au pair applicant in a particular region of a country cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, **if there is any mention of a regional preference on the application or interview forms, the application will be put "on-hold" until it is re-written.** Regional preferences can be noted on a separate cover sheet.

- **Passport-Size Photograph**

Please attach (with glue is preferable) a passport-sized photograph to the first page of the application. **You should appear happy and smiling in your**

photographs, as this is very important to host families. Photographs with lighter backgrounds often portray you in the best light.

- **Applicant's Full Legal Name**

Please clearly print your **first, middle, and last name(s) exactly as it appears on your passport** on all application forms. If the name is not written correctly on the application, this could lead to visa delays and possibly denials, as what is written on the Au Pair Application will be what is printed on the visa application documents.

If you generally use another name (shortened version of your name, middle name, "nickname") you should mention this in your application essay.

- **Phone Number(s)**

Interested host families will call you for a telephone interview. You need to clearly write your home telephone number, and any alternate phone number, on the application form.

International dialing code + country code + city code + phone number.

- **Email Address**

Most host families now have internet access, and may choose to contact you by email. Including an email address will encourage many families to contact potential applicants. Please make sure the email address is very clearly written. **If an applicant includes an email address on your file, please check the account regularly.**

- **Vital Au Pair Information**

Please clearly indicate your nationality, country of legal residence, citizenship, date of birth, city of birth, country of birth, native language and all other languages you speak (including English).

- **Passport Information**

If you are a foreign national, please make sure that you possess a valid passport for the entire time you will be on the AuPair program. You need to clearly write your passport number on the application form. Passports can take several weeks or months to obtain, so you must hold a valid passport at the time of application to the program. The passport must also be in good physical condition, as any damage could result in a delay in the visa application process.

- **Ages and Types of Child Care Experience**

The ages of the children you have experience working with and the ages you feel comfortable working with should be noted. The more age groups you are experience with and comfortable with will increase your chances of matching with the right host family. Ideally, the age groups you have experience with will correspond with the ages you feel comfortable caring for.

- **Specialized Skills**

You should mention any special skills that could be useful in your childcare responsibilities. These skills, interests, or talents may include the ability to swim, life-saving or first-aid experience, an athletic interest, or even a musical talent.

- **Childcare Experience**

In the childcare experience section on the au pair application, you should clearly list all experiences you have had caring for a child (or children). This section is very important, and you can attach an additional page to complete the information if necessary. We need to know if you have had any experience with children younger than two years old. **It is crucial that you fill this section out correctly with all details included.**

- **Personal Characteristics**

You should note your personal characteristics such as your religious affiliation and how often you practice your religion, if you smoke (it is much more difficult to place an applicant who smokes), if you can live with pets, if you follow a special diet, or if you have any other important characteristics the host family should know about.

- **Education Level Completed**

It is imperative that you have completed secondary school (high school) or its equivalency to participate on the au pair program.

- **Driver's License**

A valid driver's license is a requirement for aupair work in South Africa **If you are a foreign national you will need an International Driver's License prior to your flight.**

- **Hobbies and Clubs**

The hobbies and clubs section of the application should include any and all hobbies and clubs you are interested in.

- **Photograph Album**

If you are a foreign national the au pair photo album section should include **two pages of pictures showing you taking care of children.** Host families are more inclined to choose an applicant pictured with a child in your arms than an applicant pictured with friends on the beach. All photos should be securely fastened to a white sheet of paper to avoid being lost during processing and photocopying, and captions should be written describing the photograph.

- **Au Pair Family Information**

Host families care about what your family is like to get a clearer picture about the prospective au pair. **What you include under this section should not be repeated in the exact words in the letter to the host family.**

- **Letter to the Host Family**

If you are a foreign national the letter to the host family is another essential component of the application. Its content is a strong factor in quickly matching an applicant with a host family. An applicant's letter should refer to certain interests, talents, or personality traits that you possess.

For example:

- Your love of, interest in, and experience with children
- Honesty about your true nature and character -- it is important that you be honest about your intentions for participating in the AuPair program
- Your dedication to the program -- a host family wants to see that an applicant is ready to commit your time to your children and not to socializing at bars and being constantly away from home

The letter to the host family should be one page in length only, and must be typed or clearly hand-written by you herself. This letter reflects your level of English and your interest in the program. You may ask for help in regard to the content of the letter, but not for correcting the grammar.

You can reduce your chance of matching with a host family if the following is found about your letter:

- No mention of children
- Mention of your time spent socializing in bars or discos
- Mention of personal family problems as one of the reasons that an applicant wants to travel abroad
- Mention of a serious boy/girlfriend within the letter -- host families will worry that you will be homesick for this person and not want to stay the duration of your year.

- **Medical Record**

If you are a foreign national an authorized physician must complete the medical record. The physician will have to sign and stamp the medical record. **If you have been hospitalized in the past, or have had any disease or abnormality, the physician needs to give an explanation and dates.** It is extremely important to include a history of all existing medical conditions.

It may be necessary to attach a separate letter from the doctor to further explain any abnormal medical history.

Applicants with current medical conditions that may need treatment while you are abroad, should consider purchasing additional medical insurance to cover that type of treatment. **The insurance provided with the AuPair program will not cover any pre-existing conditions or treatment for those conditions.**

Applicants with very serious (or potentially serious) medical conditions may not be accepted onto the program.

- **Two Childcare References (from non-family members)**

Often host families would also like to call references to speak with them about you further. It is important that the referee's English speaking ability be noted on the reference form in case the family would like to call the referee.

If the author of the reference does not speak English, please have them write the recommendation in your native language and provide us with an original and the translations.

- **Personal/Character Recommendation (from a non-family member)**

This form should also be filled out in its entirety. The personal/character recommendation could be from a teacher, employer, supervisor, or friend, etc. At least one personal/character reference must be included with each au pair application.

- **Au Pair One Page Interview**

If you are a foreign national you must be interviewed in English. Your interviewer cannot be related to you and must provide their contact details.

JCR or their representatives request that an applicant be available to have your application circulate for at the minimum of 90 days. In general JCR or their representatives can find suitable placements for highly qualified applicants in less than 90 days, but this circulation time will provide you the best opportunity to match with the right family.

Remember, applicants must be available for the entire 12 month au pair program year with no exceptions to this rule.

- **Au Pair Background Check or Police Clearance**

A background check/police clearance is also an essential part of the application. An application will not be circulated until the background check/police clearance has been received. If you are South African, you can do this online with www.verisource.co.za

Additional Information

Financial information

During the au pair's year, you will receive:

- A weekly or monthly living stipend from the host family
- As you are live-in; room and board (this means that the household expenses of having another person in the home, i.e. electricity, water, etc. are paid by the host family and you get your own room in the family home and all meals provided)

The au pair is financially responsible for personal expenses (i.e. long distance telephone charges, internet use, personal hygiene products, souvenirs, and extra curricular activities such as going to the movies, sporting events, fairs, etc.)

Homesickness/Culture Shock

After arrival at the host family, the au pairs may experience the shock of loneliness and homesickness. Some au pairs will have to take care of infants all day long and will have to face being alone without an adult or older child to talk to directly. The JCR or their representatives can direct the au pairs to activities in which you can participate during your free time. The AuPair Partner can also help au pairs get in contact with other au pairs in the area. Although the AuPair Partner is there to assist the au pairs, it is ultimately up to the au pairs to make the effort to get over the feelings of homesickness and loneliness.

Au pairs should be aware that there is a transitory period that every au pair goes through. Eventually these feelings will pass, and as long as the au pair is committed to working through them, you will enjoy the rest of your stay.

The Work Commitment

You need to understand that being an au pair is not a holiday. You must expect to work as per your contract.

Public Holidays

Many families work on public holidays, so an au pair may not have a holiday depending on the work schedule of the host family. You may be needed to assist the family. Even on holidays, the au pair should plan to spend most of the day with your host family, enjoying family and cultural traditions.

Disciplining the Children

Host families and au pairs oftentimes have conflicting ideas about disciplining children. Strong or physical discipline is not accepted. **The au pair should never hit or shake a child.**

You should discuss, in detail, with the host family what is expected of you in terms of how to discipline the host family's children. **You must accept what the family tells you about their child rearing and disciplining methods.** Host families require their children be raised and disciplined by the methods they have determined. You will have to be flexible and accept this even if you disagree with the family's method of raising and disciplining children.

Smoking

If you state on your application that you do not smoke, you must not smoke. It is very upsetting for a host family to find out that the au pair smokes once you arrive at their home. On the application, you must not lie or hide the truth. Should the host family discover that you smoke, they will feel that their au pair is not trustworthy and this can lead to further problems.

Please note that it is very difficult to place an applicant that smokes. JCR or their representatives may not be able to accept applicants who smoke.

Access to a Car

Access to a car for personal use is not guaranteed for every au pair. Au pairs should understand that it is a privilege and not their right to drive the host family's car. The host family should provide car insurance, however, if the au pair gets into an accident of their fault while using the car, the au pair may be held responsible for the insurance deductible.