



*Monday, August 6, 2007*  
**Reported by Cindy Hsu**

## **Family First: Finding a Babysitter Online**

Finding a nanny can be incredibly stressful and time consuming, so if you're looking for a way to pre-screen the candidates by watching an on-line video and resume you can check out [NYCNannyfinder.com](http://NYCNannyfinder.com).

Robert Woodring came up with the idea after trying to find a nanny for his son Alexander and getting tired of the droves of candidates who were sent to his home through an agency.

Another option is [Sittercity.com](http://Sittercity.com), which places babysitters and nannies throughout the country. Genevieve Thiers launched the company in 2001 and has advice for anyone searching for a nanny.

1. When posting a job, make the posting clear, coherent and comprehensive. It's easy to spew off several random job details, but are they the details that really matter? Make sure the posting clearly states your needs (one-time Saturday night sitter vs. an ongoing Tuesday afternoon sitter for six months), so you won't have to worry about hiring a sitter with scattered availability. Also, make sure you include general but crucial information about the children, such as their ages, and about the job expectations (will the sitter be doing light housework or making dinner?).
2. Screening! Do it! Never, ever hire a babysitter without thoroughly screening her first. Sittercity's four-step screening process has helped hundreds of thousands of parents find trustworthy caregivers. First, read other parents' feedback for the sitter, conveniently posted directly on the sitter's [Sittercity.com](http://Sittercity.com) profile. Second, check the sitter's references, whose phone number or e-mail address is also listed on the sitter's profile. Third, conduct an interview so you can get a feel for the sitter's personality and how she will mesh with your family. Fourth, get a background check on your top candidate to give you valuable peace of mind.
3. Follow Sittercity's interview tips. As a part of the crucial screening process, parents should conduct an in-person interview - and make it a family affair! By having the kids present at the interview, you'll be able to see how the sitter reacts to and interacts with your little ones.

Plus, you'll be able to ask the (older) kids directly what they thought of the sitter. Also, make sure you have a list of interview questions to ask the potential sitter - we post a comprehensive list on Sittercity.com's article library. And, no matter what, listen to your gut instinct! If something doesn't seem right at this early stage, you won't be comfortable leaving your children in this sitter's care later.

4. Screen at least three sitters, and use one as primary and two as backups. Even if you hire a fantastic sitter, there's no guarantee that she'll always be available for you. Instead of going through a rushed screening process at the last minute when your primary sitter can't come, take care of it now, before a scheduling problem arises.

5. Set up a clear communications plan right away after hiring. The key to keeping a good sitter and a happy family (yes, at the same time!) is making sure you have an open line of communication with your sitter. Scheduling brief meetings with her to discuss any issues she may be having or to give her some direct feedback is a great way to make sure that this professional relationship stays strong.

At Sittercity, we know it may be difficult to discuss certain things with a sitter (such as correcting one of her behaviors), so our website provides tips for HOW to approach these discussions and what tactics you can use to get your point across without offending the sitter or hurting her feelings. It's win-win!

And here are five questions that parents need to ask (or haven't thought of asking) nannies during an interview:

- (General Question) What do you look for in an employer/family?
- Do you know First Aid? CPR? Are you familiar with the Heimlich maneuver?
- Do you have any particular religious affiliation that might affect the way you care for our children? Christian Science, etc.?
- What do you think is the best way to handle tantrums?
- Can you travel with my family if we need you to?
- Do you plan on taking any time off in the next six months?