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PREPARING AN APPLICATION FOR ACCEPTANCE ONTO THE EUROPEAN AUPAIR PROGRAM.

The German, Dutch, French, Austrian, Danish, Belgian Definition of an Au Pair

The au pair program is organized to permit foreign nationals the opportunity to live with a host family and participate directly in the home life of the host family while providing limited child-care services and attending a language school to learn the language of the host country. An au pair is expected to work from 20 to 35 hours per week and perform light housework related to the children for whom she cares; In France however she also be expected to perform general housekeeping tasks. 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. This is what Europeans understand by the words "au pair."

Completing your application for France .

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. **Since the application is scanned, you should complete them in black ink or type the application.** If the photocopies are difficult to read because the ink is not dark enough, this may reduce an applicant's chance to match with a host family. Any additional pages should be on white paper and 27.5 cm x 21.7 cm in size.

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 the "Au Pair Match Information Sheet."

Your first form is the AUPAIR APPLICATION FORMS:

- **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.** Colour 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. To make an international call from outside of South Africa a family will call as follows:

International dialing code + country code + city code + phone number so if you live in Johannesburg for example, you would put +27 (country code) 11 (city code) 5555555 (phone number), if Durban +27 31 5555555. It may seem obvious but a lot of applicants forget to tell us if their numbers change or don't keep their mobile phones with them at all times. If a family cannot reach you easily, they will choose another candidate.

- **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**

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.

- **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.**

- **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. Please remember that if you mark 2-5 only and a family has a child that is almost 6, they will not call you because you are not willing to work with children older than 5, so rather mark more age groups and have more choice of good families.

- **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.

- **Personal Characteristics**

You should note your personal characteristics such as your religious affiliation and how often you practice your religion, if you smoke (if you smoke, rather forget this application and apply to the German program instead), 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**

You must provide a copy of your matric certificate or your equivalent school leaving certificate showing proof that you have completed school to a level that allows you to attend a tertiary level institution. This must be translated into French by a sworn translator.

- **Unabridged Birth Certificate**

You must apply for this on the correct forms from Home Affairs and it must be translated by a sworn translator. It can take six weeks for just this document so plan well in advance. If you ask a travel agency for assistance with this they can sometimes get it done faster as it is needed for visa purposes.

- **Driver's License**

A valid driver's license is an advantage for France. **If you have one, you will need an International Driver's License prior to your flight. You can obtain this by presenting your driver's license at any branch of the Automobile Association.**

That completes the basic application. Your supporting documentation must include.

- **Photograph Album**

The au pair photo album section should include **two A4 pages of pictures showing you taking care of children, with your family and friends and your hobbies and interests.** Host families are more inclined to choose an applicant pictured with a child in your arms and the more photos you provide the better. 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. Make sure you write your name on the back of the collage.

- **Letter to the Host Family**

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. Please also prepare a letter in French, this must be in your own words unassisted so that the family can see your level of competency in French.

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 or two pages in length only, and must be typed or clearly hand-written by you. 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.

- **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.

- **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 Interview**

You must be interviewed in English for 1-2 hours. Your interviewer cannot be related to you and must provide their contact details. **The objective of the interview is to determine your:**

- 1) Motivation to participate in the AuPair program. Au pairs should participate in the program because you have a strong interest in providing childcare and learning about your host country's culture.
- 2) Ability and willingness to complete the full twelve-month au pair program. You should understand that participating in the au pair program is making a commitment to provide childcare to a family for one entire year.
- 3) Level of maturity, adaptability, and flexibility. An au pair must be able to adjust to living with a family. You should demonstrate a strong desire to integrate into the host family's lifestyle. The au pair provides childcare for the host family, but you are also considered a family member and should try to adapt accordingly.
- 4) English language ability. **The interviewer's assessment of your English language ability is very important.** Host families want to know how well you speak English. Many host families want their au pair to have strong English language skills. More importantly, however, host families want an **honest** assessment of your English speaking abilities. The most essential factor is that the au pair and the host family are able to communicate with each other effectively. This begins when host families interview applicants by telephone.

It is important to be accurate when rating your English ability. An incorrect or biased rating could create severe problems for the au pair and host family. It might even result in the dismissal and early return of the au pair. Native English speaking applicants should be given an English rating of 10. If an applicant is not a native English speaker, you should not be given a score higher than 9 unless you speak English as well as a native English speaker.

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

The 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 and is required for your visa application.

Apply at your local police station. For South Africans the police clearance is processed at the Centre in Pretoria, 1st floor Sanlam Plaza West, cnr Andries and Schoeman Streets. Going personally can speed up the process. Postnet also offer a courier service for this. You must however go first to your local police station to get your fingerprints taken and to pay the fee.

- **Au Pair Agreement**

Applications will not be accepted as complete until the correct Au Pair Agreement has been signed and submitted by you. **You should read the agreement carefully, as it will answer many questions you may not think of until you are already overseas.**

- **Medical Record**

An authorized physician must complete the form, preferably your family doctor. The form must be translated into French by a sworn translator. **If you have been hospitalized in the past, or have had any disease or abnormality, you need to give an explanation and dates.** It is extremely important to include a history of all existing medical conditions.

It may be necessary to provide a separate letter from your family 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.

Additional Information

Financial information

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

- A weekly living stipend from the host family
- 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.)

Air Travel Information

The Host family provides the round-trip international airplane ticket for the au pair, if you do not complete your contract **you will be responsible to repay the costs of this ticket.**

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 AuPair Partner 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. AuPair Partners may not be able to accept applicants who smoke.

Access to a Car

Access to a car is not guaranteed for every au pair. Some au pairs will have access to a car while they are caring for the children. 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.