

Hiring a Live-In Maid: Settling her into her new role.

Having a maid help in your home is a privilege and a blessing for a family. It is also a commitment and a responsibility. She is more than an employee. She is the caretaker of your home, guardian of your children, and your full time house-mate.

After you have carefully checked the qualifications and background of your new hire, you will now begin to settle her into your home. This is a relationship like no other: one that requires trust and respect. It can be uncomfortable to bring a stranger, often from a different background, into the most intimate and private realm of your life, 24/7. Relax, remember, she probably has the same concerns as you.

You can make the settling in process a little easier by setting clear expectations of your arrangement. Discuss your expectations of privacy and interaction. Is she considered a part of your family? Will she join family outings? Does she want to? Talk about her job role: is she mainly responsible for cleaning and cooking? Will she be watching your children? Do you expect her to teach and engage with your children? If so, how? Should she enforce family rules or intervene when children are misbehaving? Spend an afternoon helping your children familiarize with the new maid and ensure she is capable of caring for a child to your expectations. Show her what you want.

Provide your maid with a routine schedule and duties; don't assume she knows what is on your mind. Make sure she knows how to operate household appliances and gas stoves, as every home is unique. If you have unique cooking requirements, then provide her with recipes and meal plans. Educate her on work safety and household hazards (cooking fires, sprains from heavy lifting, and falls from step ladders are more common than one would guess).

Every family and culture has different expectations and priorities. Employers should not expect maids to know exactly what is needed to be done, or how. Show her what you expect for cooking and cleaning hygiene. Are you getting a pet? Many maids might have fears or discomfort around animals. It's better to check before bringing one home.

Sometimes employers forget how uncomfortable a maid might feel. She is living in a stranger's home and has little space for privacy. Show her around the home, and show her where she can store items or food. Set up her private space with a bed, a desk, lamps and other essentials. Most employers provide or pay an allowance for toiletries, food, and essentials. Discuss whether she will eat with the family or be given time and space to prepare her own meals.

Help her meet your neighbours and neighborhood maids. Show her around your area and orient her with bus schedules and nearby shops and services. Oftentimes, her only social relations will be her family far overseas. Help her get a SIM card and data plan so she can stay in touch with her family. It is also quite common for employers to provide maids with cable TV as well as wi-fi access so the maid can Skype with her family. These little gestures will likely go a long way in reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation that maids might feel.

What are her personal needs? It is required to provide time for weekly worship, if she desires. Does she prefer to stay home and chat online with family or is she looking for time off to visit friends and get out of the house. Remember, nobody likes to spend all their days and time inside the same place. Remember, she probably wakes up before you do, and often works alone all day. Make sure she gets clear time to rest and socialize. Weekly days off will ensure your maid is refreshed and recharged during the work week.

As her sponsor you have certain legal and ethical obligations towards your maid. By law, she is entitled to her monthly salary (as per her contract), medical coverage, time off, annual vacation, as well as an end of service gratuity. Recent changes to exit permit laws also provide her the right to exit Qatar at any point during her contract, either permanently, or on temporary leave for exceptional personal circumstances (illness, death, etc). If either of you wishes to terminate the contract, you as her sponsor must either provide an NOC for her to transfer sponsors OR pay for her return flight home.

You should ensure your maid understands local laws and regulations, as well as the penalties for breaking these laws. What might be acceptable in her home country might be illegal here. Make sure she understands the difference.

Make sure you and your maid both have a signed copy of the work contract in case any misunderstandings or disputes arise. She is not required to perform work outside of the contract, and it is illegal for maids to take on part-time work for other employers, even with your consent. Your maid is responsible to keep her passport and all her personal identification cards safe and secure. It is illegal for employers to withhold a maid's passport or personal ID from her; an offense that carries fines of up to 50,000QR.

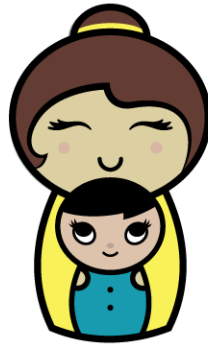
Now, take a breath. Hiring a maid can be a combination of having a house-mate, babysitter, and employee. All at the same time. The main thing is to remember the golden rule: treat others as you would want to be treated yourself. Ignore stereotypes and generalizations; instead rely on your intuition and values. Respect and trust and consideration are powerful tools to improve a relationship and will be reciprocated.

It will take some time to find the balance between being a responsible and respectful employer, as well as being a considerate house-mate. But when you do find that balance you will find your life is so much easier and your family is even more content than ever.

With a little caution, work and the human touch, you will likely find this is one of the best decisions you have ever made for your family.

Congratulations. You deserve it.

Courtesy of Doha Nanny
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