



Your Guide to Employing a Foreign Domestic Worker



MINISTRY OF
MANPOWER

Today, many households in Singapore employ a Foreign Domestic Worker (FDW). With FDWs helping with household chores and caring for our young and elderly, more Singaporeans are able to join the workforce, knowing that our homes are well taken care of while we are at work.

As in any employer-employee relationship, it is important that both parties work towards establishing a harmonious working relationship. As an employer, you have an important part to play in helping your FDW adjust to life and work in Singapore.

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has published this Guide to help FDW employers in the management of their FDWs. This Guide spells out your roles and responsibilities as an FDW employer and provides advice on FDW employment issues. We hope that this Guide will help you build a positive working relationship with your FDW.



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1 Deciding to Employ a Foreign Domestic Worker

Employing a foreign domestic worker (FDW) is a serious commitment. This chapter highlights some factors you should consider before you decide to employ an FDW.

Your Commitment as an FDW Employer

Employing an FDW is a serious commitment. You need to consider the financial cost, the time needed to train and supervise the FDW and your legal responsibilities. More importantly, you must be ready to have an FDW living with your family under the same roof.

Challenges of Hiring an FDW

Be prepared to face the challenges of an FDW who may:

- Not be able to speak or understand your language easily. Her spoken English may not meet your expectations
- Not be able to care for your loved ones or to clean your home according to your expectations
- Need constant supervision and coaching
- Have difficulty adjusting to living and working in a new environment
- Have a different way of life, beliefs and customs

If you are not prepared to face these challenges, there are alternatives to employing an FDW. These are discussed on page 7.



Choosing an FDW

Once you have decided to employ an FDW, think through your selection criteria carefully. Focus on the primary duties you want your FDW to fulfil and select an FDW with the skills and qualities to perform those duties. For example:

Caring for Children

Look for an FDW who:

- Likes children
- Is energetic and patient
- Is pleasant and willing to learn
- Has experience caring for children
- Has the ability to communicate with your children

Caring for the Elderly or Disabled

The FDW should:

- Be physically strong if the family member needs assistance to move around
- Be patient and sensitive
- Be willing to learn
- Have experience in looking after the invalid, disabled or elderly
- Have the ability to communicate in a language the family member is familiar with

Cleaning the House

A suitable FDW should:

- Be familiar with using household appliances
- Know basic English if you require the FDW to do marketing or shopping for groceries
- Be willing to learn

Alternatives to Employing an FDW

If you are concerned about the legal and financial obligations or the inconvenience of having an FDW living in your home, you can consider:

- Placing your children at infant, child or student care centres
- Seeking help for the elderly or sick from the relevant elderly care or medical groups
- Hiring local domestic workers on a regular basis for household chores.
(Such workers usually charge an hourly fee)



Remember :

- Employing an FDW is a commitment. Be prepared to provide for, manage and supervise the FDW
- Make sure you and your family members are ready for the FDW to live in your home
- Select your FDW carefully
- Have reasonable expectations of your FDW



2 Obligations of FDW Employers and FDWs

This chapter highlights some employment guidelines and obligations under the Conditions of Work Permit for employers and FDWs.

Your Obligations as an FDW Employer

When you employ an FDW, you are required by law to comply with the Work Permit Conditions.

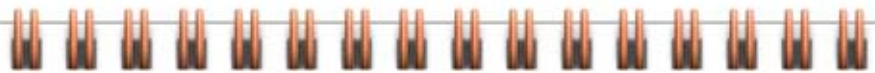
Employers who breach the Work Permit Conditions may:

- Have their FDW's Work Permit revoked
- Have their security deposit forfeited
- Have their future Work Permit applications rejected
- Be prosecuted

Employment

You are Responsible for Your FDW

- You are responsible for the supervision of your FDW. You also have a duty to take care of your FDW even if you are not the person involved in the day-to-day supervision of your FDW.

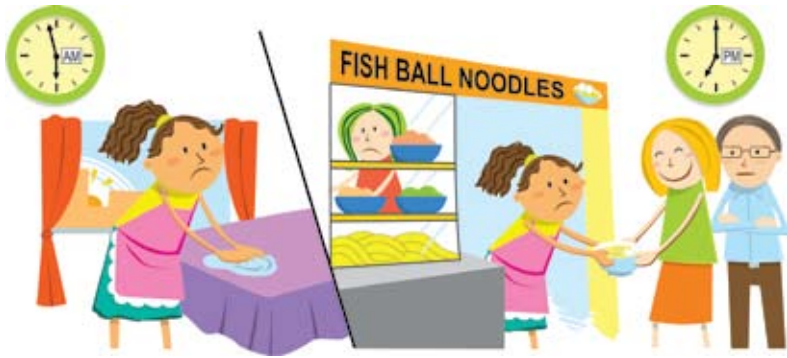


FACT FILE

In February 2006, an FDW fell eight stories to her death when hanging laundry on a narrow ledge. The employer claimed that it was her mother-in-law who had instructed the FDW to climb onto the ledge. The court rejected her claim and ruled that as the legal employer, she should bear the "ultimate responsibility" for the FDW's safety. The employer was sentenced to two weeks in jail.

Your FDW cannot work for Another Person or for Your Business

- Your FDW is only allowed to work for you; the employer stated on her Work Permit card. She must not be deployed to work for anyone else or asked to help out in your business.



FDW can only do Household Work

- FDWs are not allowed to do non-household work. For example, FDWs must not:
 - cook for the employer's food catering business
 - serve in a food stall
 - work in the employer's shop, business or office

FDW can only work at Employer's Address as stated in her Work Permit Card

- The FDWs should not work at a different location. An exception may be made for FDWs who accompany their employer's children to a caregiver's home to care for the children under the caregiver's supervision. In this case, the FDW must agree to the arrangement and should not be asked to do the full load of housework in both homes.

FACT FILE

In September 2005, an employer deployed her FDW to help out at her food stall from 10am to 6pm from Monday to Friday. The FDW's duties at the stall included serving customers, collecting money from customers and packing food. The employer was charged for illegal deployment and fined \$3,000. Her security deposit of \$5,000 was also forfeited.

Your FDW's Upkeep, Maintenance and Well-being

Maintenance and Well-being

- You must bear the costs of your FDW's upkeep and maintenance such as food, lodging and medical expenses. Such costs should not be deducted from her salary.

Medical Care

- You must provide your FDW with access to medical treatment and bear the full cost of her medical care including hospitalisation. From 1 January 2010, you must purchase medical insurance coverage of at least \$15,000 per year for your FDW's inpatient care and day surgery during her stay in Singapore. You must also take up a Personal Accident Insurance policy for your FDW, with a minimum sum assured of \$40,000.

Your FDW's Upkeep, Maintenance and Well-being

Mandatory Weekly Rest Day with effect from 1 Jan 2013

- All FDWs whose Work Permits are issued on or after 1 January 2013 will be entitled to a weekly rest day. However, the employers can compensate the FDW by paying at least one day's salary if she agrees to work on her rest day. The employer must obtain the FDW's agreement and document the rest day arrangements in writing, so as to avoid misunderstandings and disputes. It is in the interest of both parties to clearly document the mutually agreed rest day arrangements.
- Instead of compensating for a rest day forgone, employers can also give your FDW a replacement rest day within the same month.

- Your FDW should be able to choose how she would like to spend her rest day, so that she could have a proper emotional and physical break from work. You can encourage your FDW to take part in constructive and meaningful activities such as educational courses and skills training, to help her spend her time more productively. There are non-governmental organisations that offer skills training programmes and organise recreational activities for FDWs on their rest days. You can find out more about these programmes on Page 31 and encourage your FDWs to participate.
- More information is available on the MOM website [<http://www.mom.gov.sg/foreign-manpower/passes-visas/work-permit-fdw/before-you-apply/Pages/default.aspx#wellbeing>]

Accommodation

- You should provide for your FDW's basic needs such as a bed or mattress, a blanket, towels and bathroom amenities.
- Your FDW should only stay at the address stated on the Work Permit card. An exception may be made for your FDW to stay at a different address when you are temporarily not in Singapore.

Adequate Rest

- Ensure that your FDW has sufficient rest.
- Grant her rest day(s) according to your employment contract with her.



Paying Your FDW's Salary

- The salary period agreed between you and your FDW must not exceed one month.
- The FDW must be paid her salary promptly and regularly. She must be paid no later than 7 days after the last day of her salary period.
- Give her the option of having her salary transferred directly into her bank account.
- You must keep a record of all salary payments.
- Do not penalise your FDW by making deductions from her salary to offset the costs of her food, lodging, medical expenses or repatriation.
- Your FDW should be paid in full. For example, you should not withhold her salary or ask her to put up a bond to guarantee her return from home leave.
- You should not withhold the salaries of your FDW on the pretext of safekeeping her salary or delaying payment for extended periods.



FACT FILE

In October 2004, an employer who failed to pay her FDW for almost two years was fined \$3,000. She was also ordered by the court to pay her FDW the outstanding salary owed to her, which amounted to \$3,580.

Retention of FDW's Work Permit and Passport

- You must not retain your FDW's Work Permit
She should carry her original Work Permit with her at all times for inspection on demand by any public officer.
- You must not retain your FDW's passport without her consent
If prior consent was given for you to safekeep the passport, you must return the passport to your FDW upon her request.

Providing a Safe Working Environment

You must provide a safe working environment for your FDW and ensure that she does her household chores in a way which does not endanger her life and safety.

For more information on your FDW's safety, see Chapter 4.

FACT FILE

In September 2006, an employer instructed her FDW to climb out of the window of her 18th storey apartment and stand on a narrow ledge to clean the windows. The employer was convicted for breach of the Work Permit Conditions and fined \$3,500.



FACT FILE

In July 2006, an employer was fined \$2,000 for asking her FDW to climb and prune a 6-metre mango tree in her yard.

Managing Your FDW

- You must ensure that your FDW is not ill-treated, exploited, neglected or endangered. As FDWs work and live with their employers, they can be more vulnerable to abuse.
- Do not subject your FDW to verbal abuse.
- To provide greater protection for FDWs, the Penal Code was amended in 1998 to increase penalties for abuse of FDWs by 1½ times. Convicted employers may have their future Work Permit applications rejected.



FACT FILE

In March 2002, an employer received a five-year jail term for abusing her 19-year-old FDW. For over 20 days, the employer scalded the FDW with boiling water, poked her thighs with a pair of scissors and hit the back of her head with the back of a chopper.

FACT FILE

In July 2002, an employer who physically abused his FDW and caused her death was sentenced to 18½ years in prison and 12 strokes of the cane. At her death, the FDW was found to have multiple scars and injuries.

Sending Your FDW Home

Sending Your FDW Home

- You are responsible for sending your FDW home when her Work Permit is revoked, cancelled or if you no longer require her services. She must be sent to her town or place of origin within her home country.
- You must bear the full cost of repatriation. All outstanding salaries or monies due must be paid to your FDW before she is sent home.
- Give your FDW due notice if you are cancelling her Work Permit. If your FDW requests for her employment to be terminated, be sensitive and respect her request.

Breaching of Work Permit Conditions by FDW

- If your FDW breaches any of the Work Permit Conditions applicable to her, inform MOM, cancel her Work Permit and send her home.
- For more information on FDW's obligations under the Work Permit Conditions, see page 16.
- Employers who fail to repatriate their FDWs upon cancellation of their Work Permits risk losing their \$5,000 security deposit.

Remember :

- You are legally responsible for the supervision and management of your FDW
- Your FDW must not work for another employer or in your business
- Your FDW can only do household work at the address stated in her Work Permit
- You must provide for the upkeep and maintenance of your FDW
- You must provide a safe working environment for your FDW
- You must pay your FDW's salary within 7 days after her salary period
- You must bear the full cost of repatriation and ensure that your FDW is repatriated to her town or place of origin within her home country

Your FDW's Legal Obligations

FDWs are bound by the Work Permit Conditions. FDWs who breach the Work Permit Conditions are liable to have their Work Permits revoked and be barred from working in Singapore in future. You should ensure that your FDW understands and complies with the Work Permit Conditions.

Some Work Permit Conditions for FDWs

The FDW:

- Can only work for the employer at the address stated in the Work Permit
- Can only perform household duties
- Cannot be involved in or own a business



- Must reside at the employer's residential address as stated in the Work Permit
- Must go for medical examinations by a Singapore registered doctor as and when directed by MOM
- Must report to MOM as and when directed by MOM
- Must not apply to marry a Singapore Citizen or Permanent Resident without MOM's prior approval
- Cannot become pregnant or deliver a child in Singapore

For a full set of the Work Permit Conditions for FDW Employers and FDWs, please refer to www.mom.gov.sg



3 Employing an FDW

You can choose to employ an FDW who is not in Singapore or an FDW who is currently working for another employer. This chapter gives you an overview of how to apply for an FDW.

If you employ an FDW who has not worked in Singapore before, the procedures and requirements are different from employing an FDW who is already working for another employer.

Employing an FDW Who Has Not Worked in Singapore Before

All FDWs must meet MOM's requirements before they are allowed to work here.

1. Before Applying for an FDW

- The FDW must be at least 23 years old and have at least 8 years of formal education.
- Attend the Employers' Orientation Programme if you have not employed an FDW before.



2. Applying for an FDW

- Submit Work Permit application.



3. Getting ready to bring FDW into Singapore

- Receive a Letter of Notification from MOM to bring the FDW into Singapore.
- Furnish a security deposit of \$5,000 in the form of a Banker's/Insurance Guarantee or cash.
- Purchase Personal Accident Insurance at any insurance company.
- Receive a letter from MOM acknowledging receipt of your security deposit.



4. After FDW arrives in Singapore

- Send the FDW for:
 - i) Settling-In Programme within the first 3 working days of her arrival*
 - ii) Medical Examination
- Request for Work Permit from MOM.
- FDW to report to Work Pass Services Centre for photo-taking & fingerprinting.
- Collect Work Permit Card at Work Pass Services Centre.

* Excluding the day of FDW's arrival in Singapore.

Employing an FDW Who is Currently Working in Singapore for Another Employer

This is also known as applying for a Transfer of FDW.

1. Applying for Transfer of FDW

- Attend the Employers' Orientation Programme if you have not employed an FDW before.
- Submit Work Permit application. Application to include consent from FDW's current employer to transfer the FDW to you as the new employer.



2. Preparing to Transfer the FDW

- Both you and the FDW's current employer will receive an In-Principle Approval Letter from MOM.
- Furnish a security deposit of \$5,000 in the form of a Banker's/Insurance Guarantee or cash.
- Purchase Personal Accident Insurance at any insurance company.
- Receive a letter from MOM acknowledging receipt of your security deposit.



3. Getting Ready for your FDW

- Request for Work Permit from MOM.
- Collect new Work Permit Card for FDW at Work Pass Services Centre.

Note: The FDW can only start working for you after the new Work Permit Card has been issued in your name.

Employers who change their FDWs frequently

- Employers who change their FDWs frequently within a year may be required to attend the Classroom Employers' Orientation Programme or an interview with an MOM officer before the Ministry processes their Work Permit Applications..
- Other than the number of FDWs hired, the Ministry will also take into consideration the employment periods of the FDWs. Details are in the table:

Employer to Attend EOP	Employer to be interviewed before application is processed
5 th Application	6 th and more application
4 th application with earlier 3 FDWs <u>each</u> having less than 3 months employment	5 th application with earlier 4 FDWs <u>each</u> having less than 3 months employment

Engaging the Services of an Employment Agency

Most employment agencies (EAs) can help you with these procedures. When selecting an EA:

- Ensure the EA is licensed as MOM requires all EAs to be licensed. You may do so by checking the EA directory using the respective EA's name, and/or EA Personnel names.
- Employers may use additional information like FDW retention success rate, FDW Transfer rate, and/or demerit points accumulated to assess the EA, before making a decision.

The EA directory can be found at www.mom.gov.sg/eadirectory



4 Building a Positive Relationship With Your FDW

Cultivating a good employer-employee relationship takes time and effort. Get to know your FDW, be fair to her and treat her well.

FDWs who are new to Singapore will need time to orientate themselves to our way of life. Even if your FDW has experience working in Singapore, she still needs time to understand your expectations of her.

Help your FDW fit into your family by showing her care and understanding.

Understanding Your FDW

Your FDW comes from a different background

Her values, lifestyle and customs are different. Be firm but patient and understanding with her. This will help you create a good working relationship with her. FDWs who get along well with their employers are generally more motivated.

She is far from her family and friends

Anyone who is separated from their loved ones would feel homesick and lonely sometimes. Help your FDW adjust by allowing her to communicate with her family and friends at home.

Good working relationships start with communication

Encourage your FDW to approach you if she has any questions or problems. Make it clear to your FDW what you expect of her. With better communication, misunderstandings and disputes are also less likely to occur.

Having an Employment Contract

An employment contract which clearly spells out the terms and conditions of work and benefits such as salary and rest days can help to minimise misunderstandings. The contract should be based on mutual agreement between you and your FDW. Your employment agent can assist you in drawing up an employment contract.

Coaching Your FDW

Explain, demonstrate, supervise and give feedback

Employers sometimes need to take on the role of a coach to demonstrate, correct and encourage. Your FDW will learn faster if she is shown how to do the job. Compliment her when she has done a good job.

If she has done consistently well, it may be time to reward her with a bonus or salary increase. If her poor performance persists, consider looking for another FDW or finding alternatives to your household needs.

Plan her work

- Make sure your FDW's workload for each day is reasonable
- Check on your FDW occasionally and repeat your instructions and explanations where necessary
- Provide your FDW with a weekly or daily schedule. This will help your FDW plan her work better.

If childcare is one of her responsibilities, you should:

- Outline how general tasks such as babysitting should be performed
- Let her know your expectations for each task
- Tell her about any special requirements the child may have

If caring for the elderly or disabled is one of her responsibilities, ensure that the FDW is aware of:

- Any special dietary requirements
- How to handle any special needs of family members, such as physical needs or medications. Write down instructions that are more complex

If cooking is expected, discuss with her:

- Any special dietary requirements
- Your preferred recipes, ingredients and style of cooking
- Practical skills

Providing a Safe Working Environment for Your FDW

Employers are responsible for their FDWs' safety. She may come from an environment that does not present the same dangers that you have learnt to deal with. Supervise your FDW closely so that she knows how to perform household chores safely. Go through the following with her:

Safety in high-rise buildings

If you live in a high-rise building, your FDW must take extra precautions when:

a) Hanging Laundry



Dos

- ✓ Keep feet firmly on the floor, and the body is inside the apartment.
- ✓ Hang heavier clothes closer to the bracket and lighter clothes at the far end of pole.
- ✓ Be extra careful when retrieving laundry when it is windy and / or raining.

Don'ts

- ✗ Do not stand on chairs, stools or any raised platform.
- ✗ Do not lean too far out of the window.
- ✗ Do not tip-toe when hanging laundry.
- ✗ Do not retrieve objects that have fallen onto the window ledge or platform.

b) Cleaning Windows

Your FDW is allowed to clean window exterior (above ground level) only if she is supervised and window grilles are locked.



Dos

- ✓ When cleaning the window exterior of homes above ground level:
 - Ensure you or an adult representative is present to supervise
 - Window grilles are installed and locked at all times.
- ✓ Use cleaning tools with extended handles.



Employer supervision is required.



Don'ts

- ✗ Do not clean window exterior above ground level if there are no window grilles
- ✗ Do not stand on chairs, stools or any raised platform.
- ✗ Do not lean too far out of the window

Employers must take necessary steps to eliminate the risks involved in other tasks by following the dos and don'ts covered in our guidebook and pamphlets.

Signing of Safety Agreement

- For FDWs who are deployed from 1 Dec 2012 onwards, EAs will be required to facilitate the signing of a safety agreement between employers and the FDWs, i.e. when new employment relationships are established, whether for first-time or transfer FDWs.

- For first-time FDWs, the EA should facilitate the safety agreement after the FDW has attended the Settling-In-Programme, prior to the development of the FDW to the employer's home. For transfer FDWs, the EA should facilitate the safety agreement prior to the development of the FDW to the employer's home. The EA is not required to facilitate the safety agreement for renewals, i.e. when the employer is renewing the employment contract with her existing FDW.
- This agreement is to ensure that both employers and FDWs are aware and understand MOM's requirements when cleaning the exterior of windows. The agreement lists MOM's restrictions on the cleaning of window exterior and employers will state their requirement for the FDW to clean the window exterior in accordance to MOM's regulations. The FDW will also acknowledge the employer's requirement on cleaning the window exterior. To ensure FDWs understand, the agreement copy to be signed by the FDW will be in her native language.
- All three parties, i.e. EA, employer and FDW, will sign the safety agreement and each should keep a copy of the signed agreement.

Electrical and Fire Safety

We use different electrical appliances in our homes, such as washing machines, microwave ovens, irons, etc. Improper use of such appliances can cause burns, serious injuries or even death. Make sure your FDW knows the following:

a) Electrical Safety



Dos

- ✓ You should demonstrate how to use electrical appliances properly and safely
- ✓ After use, first switch off the appliance, turn off the socket switch, and then pull the plug out of the wall socket.



Don'ts

- ✗ Do not touch electrical appliances, switches, plugs and power points with wet hands.
- ✗ Do not overload electrical outlets by using too many plugs in one electrical socket.

b) Fire Safety



Dos

- ✓ Keep petrol, paint and other inflammable materials in safe containers away from open flames and other sources of heat.

Don'ts

- ✗ Do not leave stoves and heated appliances unattended.
- ✗ Do not leave plastic bags, cloth, towels, paper or other inflammable material near lighted stoves.

Getting Your FDW Started

Help your FDW start on the right footing by going through the checklist below.



Orientation Checklist

a) Job Duties



Go through her job duties with her. Provide a daily or weekly schedule if possible.

b) Safety



Go through household safety procedures with your FDW.

c) Hygiene



Ensure that your FDW understands your expectations of her, for example:

- Hygiene in preparing food and drinks
- Cleanliness at home
- Tips to prevent the spread of common illnesses (for eg, a cold or flu)

d) Terms and Conditions of Employment



Explain the terms and conditions in the employment contract including:

- Salary and mode of payment
- Rest days
- Medical benefits
- Scope of duties

e) Emergency telephone numbers



Your FDW should know how to get help in an emergency. Give her a list of emergency telephone numbers, such as:

- Your mobile phone /office number
- Contact numbers of other family members in case of emergency
- Police
- Ambulance services
- Fire station

f) First aid



Your FDW should be taught how to handle minor injuries.

- Treating minor cuts and bruises
- Using common drugs and medications (for eg, cough syrup, Panadol)
- When to call for an ambulance



g) FDW's Legal Obligations

Ensure that your FDW understands her obligations under the Work Permit Conditions.

h) About Singapore



Give her an overview of Singapore culture and your lifestyle. For example:

- Your working hours and daily schedule
- The different races in Singapore
- Some local customs
- Public transport
- Banking services

Training Courses for FDWs

There are many opportunities for your FDW to upgrade her skills. Courses on childcare, elderly care, cooking and sewing are easily available and may benefit you and your FDW. Here is a list of some FDW training courses.

Some Training Courses for FDWs	
FDW Association for Skills Training (FAST) Courses run by FAST are outsourced to various training providers who charge subsidised rates. They include courses on cooking, elderly care, baby care, etc.	6735 7687 www.fast.org.sg
Mujahidah Centre of Learning Courses on computer literacy, cooking, etc.	6473 7400
Filipino Overseas Workers In Singapore Courses on first aid, dressmaking, nursing, etc.	6250 0011

Useful Contact Information

Ministry of Manpower	
General enquiries	6438 5122
Cancellation of Work Permit	6438 5122
In the event of a missing FDW, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a police report • Cancel the FDW's Work Permit 	6317 1347
In the event of an FDW's death, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact MOM within 12 hours of FDW's death with the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FDW's name - Work Permit Number - Cause of death (if known) - Employer's name and contact numbers - Date, time and place of death 	18000-3395505 Or email: mom_fmmd@mom.gov.sg

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