



Guide to Hiring the Best Doula for You

Hiring a doula is no different to hiring a new employee. You have to research the possibilities and select those who on paper look like they are the right fit for you, then you have to interview them, shortlist your selection and decide based on who you feel not only has a connection with YOU, but will be the best person for the role.

But you also don't want to feel like a "job interview" – you want the conversation to flow, so by asking open-ended questions this will help to create good conversation, and most of the time the questions you are wanting to ask will be answered anyway.

Step 1 - Searching

1. Check out the various doula directories and narrow down your search to your area within say 50km. It makes sense to try and find a doula who is relatively close to you, but sometimes that's not possible, but it makes it easier for your doula to be more accessible to you, particularly when they are on-call.
2. Ask for recommendations from friends, family, childbirth educators, bodyworkers, and those in pregnancy groups on social media. I'd be more inclined to ask for recommendations **based on personal experience**, rather than just who they know in the industry. They are unlikely to recommend someone who they didn't feel gave them exceptional service.
3. Have a look at the profiles, websites or social media of those doulas who have been recommended to you and from their information see who jumps out at you, or who you feel might be a good fit for you. Doulas should outline what their services include – not just say "I support you" – what does that support look like and is it what you are looking for?

Step 2 – Initial Enquiry

1. Contact the doulas you are interested in either by phone, email, or social media – they will usually mention their preferred method of contact.
2. In your initial contact you could ask the following questions:
 - Are they available for your estimated due date?
 - What are their fees?

- What is included in their service / package?
- Do they offer payment plans?
- What training / qualifications do they have?
- Are they insured?
- Can you be sent a copy of their contract?

If there is no contract – that is a huge red flag because there is no protection for you as the client, or for the doula. The contract should highlight their role, responsibilities, inclusions, on-call period, deposit, when the balance is due, refund policy, what happens if there are hospital restrictions due to COVID-19 or anything else and they are not permitted in the hospital with you, and back up doula policy so there are no assumptions.

Step 3 - Interview

1. Once you assess all the information that the doula has provided, including their availability, their contract, and fees, you can now make a shortlist of who you would like to interview.
2. Organise a meeting with the doulas you have shortlisted. This could be in a public place like a café rather than your home, but obviously this comes down to personal preference. Since COVID-19 doulas have also become available for Zoom Meetings online, so this too could be a good initial contact, but keep in mind the “*energy*” and how you “*feel*” with a person can be lost via Zoom. You should allow an hour per doula and this should give you enough time to ask questions, have a conversation and feel into the person and their mission and values.
3. I highly recommend your partner be available to attend these interview meetings, because they too have to feel comfortable with your doula choice.
4. Ask questions – see the question guide below. Be prepared for the doulas to ask you questions as well – that way the conversation flows in a well-balanced way. There is no need to ask all the questions provided in this guide, just pick out a few that are important for you, or add anything that I have not covered.
5. Go with your gut feelings – this is your intuition and as doulas we are constantly reminding women to “*tap into their innate feelings*” so if a doula doesn’t feel right, then they are probably not the right fit for you. Also keep in mind that you might love a doula, but they may not feel the connection for you – neither of you should take it personally – you are just not meant to be.

Step 4 – Decision time

1. It's okay not to decide straight away. Even if you have a feeling on who you want to hire, you could hold off making your decision for at least 24 hours and consider how you feel about each person you interviewed. How does your partner feel?
2. Sometimes you know immediately and of course you want to get that piece of paper signed so you can hire your doula so there is no waiting – that's okay as long as you understand all her terms, conditions, and fees. If there is something that you don't agree with in the contract, don't dismiss that doula because of that – contact that doula and discuss it, because many things can be negotiable.
3. Let your chosen doula know so they can start planning.
4. Sign the contract and send that to your doula.
5. Organise payment of your deposit.
6. Arrange your next meeting to plan out your journey together.
7. Out of courtesy, contact the doulas that you met with to let them know that you have decided to choose a different doula and wish them all the best – good karma.





List of questions to ask doulas

This is a guide and there is no need to ask every one of these questions. The idea is to instigate conversation that flows, and usually most of these questions will be answered.

1. Why did you become a doula?
2. What do you love about being a doula?
3. What challenges have you had as a doula, and how did you deal with those challenges?
4. What formal training have you undertaken to become a doula?
5. What ongoing education have you done to keep up to date with evidence-based information and education?
6. How are you going to help prepare me for my birth?
7. How much time will we spend together, and how long do you stay with me during my labour, birth and after the birth?
8. How will you help and support my partner?
9. When do you go on-call for me?
10. What happens if I go into labour outside of the on-call period?
11. How many births do you take on a month and is there a risk of you being at someone else's birth if I go into labour?
12. Do you have any commitments or are you planning to be away around my estimated due date?
13. What type of births have you attended?
14. What happens if we have planned a home birth, but then things change, and I have to transfer into the hospital?
15. What if you are sick or your circumstances change, and you can't make it to my birth? Is there a back-up doula, or what if I don't want to have a back-up doula?

16. How will we communicate with one another if I have questions, or need encouragement or resources?
17. What if we make plans for my birth to be as natural as possible, but then I change my mind, so decide I would prefer to be induced or have drugs or an epidural – is this something that you would feel comfortable with and support?
18. What is your refund policy?
19. How would you advocate for me in the birth space – what does advocacy mean for you?
20. What do you wish all parents would know before birth?
21. Do you offer any other services like massage, sound therapy, reiki, bodywork, OMP or Spinning Babies etc?
22. What are your interests and hobbies?
23. If we hire you, what are our next steps?

