We understand that finding the ideal in-home caregiver can be an overwhelming task. To help you get started, use this step-by-step guide to navigate this difficult process.

**Step 1: Identify Your Needs and Budget**

Observe your loved one’s behavior and identify where they need help. Maybe they’re struggling to bathe, dress or transfer between rooms or are becoming forgetful. These suggest they need a caregiver who can help with activities of daily living or may have issues associated with mild cognitive impairment (MCI). Consider what you can afford. Research sources of financial help, such as Medicaid, Medicare and long-term care insurance.

**Step 2: Research Potential Caregivers**

Ask family and friends if they can provide a personal recommendation. Check for in-home care agencies in your area. You’ll find a wealth of up-to-date information and useful links to local care providers. Other sources include your Area Agency on Aging and senior centers. Post on trusted social media networks, such as Nextdoor, to ask for recommendations.
Step 3: Check References and Credentials

When you’ve created a shortlist, the next step is to confirm the caregivers’ references and credentials are genuine. Check license numbers with your state’s Department of Health. Contact the people who provided references and the education facilities that issued the certificates. It’s also prudent to conduct background checks to confirm the persons don’t have criminal records. Use a government website because private companies offering this service are not always up to date.

Step 4: Conduct an Interview

Conduct initial interviews by phone or an online service, such as Zoom, as this can give you a feel for the person without taking up too much of your time. Ask questions about their experience and listen carefully so you can follow up on important points. Discuss availability to determine if they can give your loved one the hours and days of care they need. Ask about their approach to caregiving and observe their communication skills.

Step 5: Set Expectations and Job Responsibilities

When you’ve settled on a caregiver, make your expectations and the role’s responsibilities clear to avoid confusion later. Discuss the care plan, duties, schedule and payments in detail. Draft a written agreement outlining the terms of employment to avoid potential misunderstandings. Ensure you each have a signed and dated copy.
Step 6: Agree on a Trial Period
Start with a pre-agreed trial period. This will give you, your loved one and the caregiver time to iron out issues and see if you’re a good fit for each other. Observe the caregiver at work and discuss the situation with your loved one to appreciate their level of satisfaction. If the caregiver doesn’t meet expectations, consider looking for a replacement.

Step 7: Monitor and Evaluate the Caregiver
If the trial period is a success, continue to monitor the caregiver to ensure they maintain standards. Use this time to identify weaknesses in the care plan and work with your loved one and the caregiver to make necessary adjustments. Continue this approach as seniors’ needs can change quickly, so the plan must be up-to-date.