

Every time we **were asked out**, my wife **would spend hours ringing around** our friends **to ask** if any of them **had** an au pair who **was free to baby-sit** for the evening.

Sometimes she **failed to** find anybody - or the girl **would simply fail to turn up** - and we **would have to** sit at home, imagining the **fun** that everybody else **was having** at the party **to which we had been asked**.

The girl **would** arrive and I **would** try to explain **to** her **about** the boys' **bedtimes** and **where to find** things.