

HOMESTAY GUIDE for HOSTS

INTRODUCTION

Hosting an International student in your home can be a very rewarding experience. Students value the opportunity of conversing in English, being involved in daily family life and learning and enjoying the company of people from a different culture.

Most International students in homestay will wish to share in many aspects of family life. However, not being familiar with our culture and life style, they simply may not know how best to do this and initially may feel hesitant, and shy. Initially, this can make them a little difficult to communicate with. Hopefully, as time passes the homestay experience will help to overcome these difficulties.

The following information is provided to help both the homestay provider and the students gain maximum benefit from the homestay experience. The aim of this information is not to stereotype the student or the homestay family, but to enhance awareness and so encourage understanding and mutual respect.

RESPONSIBILITIES

We are looking for:

- Homestay Hosts who are compatible with people from other countries and whom can offer a friendly, happy and relaxed atmosphere in their home. Where the student is treated as a member of the family.
- Homestay Hosts who will provide English - speaking environment and who will encourage the student to speak English at every opportunity.
- Homestay Hosts who will take an interest in the students well being and welfare.
- Homestay Hosts who are prepared to take an interest in the student's studies and their academic aspirations and who will work with the school to support the student.
- Homestay Hosts who will assist the student to learn about an adapt to the Australian way of life and culture.

PLACING STUDENTS

When placing students in homestay, there are many factors which we consider. Students fill in the Accommodation Application Form on which they state their requirements and preferences e.g. whether they like to live with children, whether they like animals in a home. Non-smoker, religion, etc. We endeavor to match students with suitable homestays taking into account both parties preferences.

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FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Homestay is a unique arrangement between the host and the student. Unlike renting a house or room, Homestay Hosts should ***NOT*** request a Bond or a security deposit from the student.

EXCEPTION: Where the Homestay Host allows an underage student to have use of a telephone line, in which is connected under the Homestay Hosts name. We suggest that the Homestay Host holds a bond of \$250 - \$300 against non-payment of the telephone account. The underage student's parents must give their permission in writing, before a phone connection is installed on the student's behalf.

The Homestay FEE contains an element to cover the fair wear and tear of the Homestay Host's property. However, accidents happen in every home and the student can certainly be asked to contribute towards replacement item. We strongly advise that where there are breakages that they are addressed immediately and replacement items purchased as quickly as possible. Do not leave dealing with this issue until your student gives you notice to move as this can cause great bitterness and distress to both parties.

Students should be advised that if they lose their house key they would have to pay, not only for a replacement key but for the purchase and fitting of a new security lock.

Homestay hosts should always finalize any payment issues with the student before the student moves away or to a new homestay. Homestay Hosts should use the 2 weeks notice period to disconnect telephone lines and to finalise any outstanding payments that are owed. Holiday payments should also be made in advanced prior to the student returning home to their country for holidays. Homestay Hosts are strongly advised NEVER to sign a financial undertaking on their student's behalf i.e. a mobile telephone contract, unless they have made special arrangements as regards the payments with the student's parents.

PAYMENT DETAILS

Depending on the payment method of the university/college, International Student Accommodation Australia will pay the Homestay Host directly for the first two (2) or four (4) weeks of accommodation depending on the arrangement, from the money the student has deposited with the university or college. This is paid approximately one week after the student's arrival. Thereafter, students should be asked to pay their fees every four weeks in advance with all monetary transactions made directly between the Homestay Host and the student or otherwise stipulated by ISAA. If payments are late or are in dispute, please telephone the student's Services manager whom will help resolve the problem. It is important that the Homestay Host reminds the student every three (3) weeks and NEVER allow the payments to be four weeks in arrears.

We strongly recommend that receipts (even hand written) be issued wherever money changes hands between Homestay Hosts and the Student.

EXPECTATIONS

The initial settling in period requires adjustments and compromise from both parties. For many students this is the first time leaving their families and friends to come to a strange place for study. Be a little understanding and offer patience. Many students are in Australia to learn English, at times you may have to repeat yourself but students do learn very quickly. Depending on how often you interact with them, will determine how fast they will settle in and become a part of your family.

THE STUDENT

May experience:

- Home-sickness (may have never been away from home before)
- Difficulty in communication; and
- Culture Shock (experiencing a completely different way of life)
- Adjustment to new kinds of Western foods

Most students adjust easily and may not be affected deeply by any of these problems. However, the Homestay Host should be alert to these conditions and be prepared to offer understanding and support to the student. Some students take time to settle in and they may seem quiet and reserved and elect to spend most of their time in their rooms. These are possible indications of homesickness or culture shock. Homestay Hosts should try and draw the student out and assist them to acclimatize to their new surroundings. If after two or three weeks you have concerns that the student does not appear to be settling very easily you may wish to telephone the student services Officer for help in assisting the student to overcome these initial problems. Emergency Telephone (08) 9456 0708 Mobile 0400565057 and is open 24 hours a day seven days a week. Please ensure this for Emergency USE ONLY.

THE HOMESTAY HOST

The Homestay Host and members of their family have to adjust to having another person(s) living in their house. The new arrival will introduce a completely new set of dynamics within the home environment, for instance;

- Introducing new types of foods
- Hearing different noises
- Altering times for using the bathroom facilities
- Altering times of television and CD (music)

Generally after one or two weeks of adapting and "give and take" from both hosts and students, life will settle into a routine and should run smoothly. Some Homestay Hosts and Students make lifelong friendships, and hosts often travel to visit ex-students in their home countries. For the children of homestay families, having an overseas student in the home can be very beneficial as they are exposed to other countries cultures and languages.

Often the biggest hurdle to settling in a new homestay is overcoming communication limitations; previously the student may have had very little opportunity to use spoken English in his or her home country. So adjusting to speaking English takes time and coping with previously unknown colloquialisms can add to the difficulties. If you experience problems communicating verbally it can sometimes help to write down what you are trying to say. Students often have a good understanding of the written word and can refer to the dictionary or mini computer to translate. Gradually, communication between you and the student will improve. Please be prepared to modify the speed of your speech, particularly if your student is still learning English. Remember-you do not need to speak more loudly-just more slowly and clearly. It is most important to be supportive and to try not to show signs of impatience. Use simple English initially and try not to use idioms or slang.

If for any reason, you find that you are experiencing difficulties with your student, for example personality clashes, excessive untidiness, never home etc. feel free to telephone the student services Officer to discuss the problem. The aim of homestay experience can be a rewarding one for both parties. However, we do appreciate that sometimes, for a variety of reasons, some hosts and students just cannot live together and sometimes the best answer is for the student to relocate to another homestay.

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ARRIVAL DAY

Please allow and encourage your student to make a brief phone call to their family as soon after their arrival as possible in order to reassure their parents that they have arrived safely.

It is best to spend as much time as possible on the first day getting to know each other in a relaxed way and to establish both parties' basic expectations of homestay. It is preferable to discuss more detailed issues over the course of the following few days. Initially it may be useful to discuss the following:

Yourself:

- How you would like to be addressed
- Make introductions to the other members of the household
- Show and introduce the student to your home - layout

FOOD

It is very important that adequate, nutritious food is provided for the student at all times. Please discuss with your student his/her likes and dislikes. Encourage them to tell you when and what they like to eat. Ask them to tell you when they have especially enjoyed a meal that you have cooked for them, and also when they don't! Nobody likes everything: so do not be offended if the student does not like something that you have prepared for them.

Be aware that teenagers generally have large appetites and that a small stature does not necessarily reflect a small appetite. Most students drink a lot of milk. Many students skip breakfast, try to encourage them to eat something for breakfast it's very important. Studying is hard work.

- The Students likes and dislikes
- Times for Meals
- Provision of snacks and whether or not the student can use the kitchen

Food is provided in full Homestay arrangement. The meals consist of Breakfast and Dinner five (5) days a week and Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner on week-ends and holidays. Lunch is NOT provided during school days and is the student's responsibility. However, each homestay must use common courtesy, in that, if the family is having lunch together, it is only courteous that the student be included. If the family is going out for lunch, then the families are encouraged to invite the student.

If the family is going out for dinner, it is advisable to invite the student. If the student declines to accept the invitation, then the hosts must ensure either a hot meal is purchased or cooked for the student. If the meal is purchased, the student is **not** to be charged for the meal.

Telephone:

- When and how the student may use the telephone
- The students own requirement for a telephone line or internet facility

House Rules

- Give the student a copy of the International Student Accommodation Australia Homestay Guide
- Discuss any other house rules

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Transportation

- Show the student on a map where your home is in relation to school/college, local shopping centre and the city of Perth.
- Explain about the public transport system that is available in your local area

Banking

- Please take your student to the nearest bank and assist them to open an account. (International students do not need to meet the 100 points requirement they just need their passport and some money).
- You may need to explain how their money is safest in the bank.

ISSUES FOR MORE DETAILED DISCUSSION WITH THE STUDENT DURING THEIR FIRST FEW DAYS IN HOMESTAY

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Please show your student the bus stop and/or train station nearest to your home. This is particularly helpful as many newly arrived students find navigating the public transport system a most daunting task. If you have time it is beneficial to travel the bus or train route with your student or to at least drive along the travel route so the student can recognize various landmarks when they do the trip on their own.

Point out that many of the bus stops are "Orange Posted" and that they need to wave the bus down to stop for them. It may be a good idea to provide bus timetables and show the student how to read them. It may be a good idea to ensure that they have the TRANSPERTH Info line number in case of difficulties. The number is 136213.

THE FAMILY/TELEVISION AREA

Discuss times that the television is usually on, and if there is a time when you like the set turned off. Show the student how to operate the television, music system, DVD/CD player.

INTERNET ACCESS

Students are encouraged to connect to the internet and to avail themselves of the college or university education facilities to assist them in their studies. Email and chat sessions are also amongst the easiest and cheapest methods of staying in touch with family and friends. However, there are many dangers associated with young people accessing the net and if you have any concerns as how long your student uses the internet, maybe they are watching DVDs until late at night or playing games or if you are concerned as to the sites that they are accessing. Please contact the Student Services Officer to discuss the matter.

WATER

Explain why water conservation is important in Western Australia and discuss the local restrictions that are in force. Explain to your student why you ask them to spend only between 5 – 10 minutes in the shower and any other restrictions practiced in your home.

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LAUNDRY

Discuss convenient times to use the washing machine and demonstrate how to use it. Discuss machine capacity, hand washing etc. Discuss how often they may do their washing. Students are not to be charged for the use of laundry facilities or washing powders or detergents.

BATHROOM

Discuss convenient times to use the bathroom, explain again about water conservation and discuss how long a student may take in showers. However, please bear in mind that many students find being timed when using the bathroom very distressing. Explain that the student must provide their own personal toiletry items such as soap, tissues, toothpaste etc. but you will provide toilet paper and laundry powder. Explain how the facilities work including the toilet-in many cultures the facilities' are different and are used in a different way.

TELEPHONE

Students are responsible for paying for their own telephone calls. We recommend that you show your student where you keep a record of the local and overseas telephone calls that they make if they are using your house phone. Discuss in length of time for calls; and how late calls may be received in the evenings. You should discuss when payment for calls is expected, so that the students can budget for this. You may also suggest to the student that buying a pre-paid card will assist them in budgeting for phone calls. If the student wishes to have their own telephone line and or Internet connection explain the costs involved and assist with information about local providers and services. The student will be responsible for the installation of both telephone line and or Internet connection to their room.

ILLNESS

All International Students who are studying in Australia on a student visa are required to purchase Private Health Insurance before the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) will grant them their Student Visa. This Insurance is called Overseas Students Health Cover (OSHC). Medibank Private. Since 2005 OSHC Worldcare Assist provides OSHC for all new international students. (www.oshcworldcare.com.au)

If your student is unwell, you should assist them to make an appointment to see local doctor and assist them as the surgery is required. Worldcare Assist has negotiated Bulk Billing facilities in some medical practices; however, all students using Medibank Private will be required to pay for the consultation fee upfront. International students should always see a doctor if they are unwell so they can ask for a Medical Certificate for cover their absence from school- even just for half a day. Any absence not covered by a medical certificate counts as an unauthorized absence. International students must not allow their absence from school to fall below 80%: if they do and there are no acceptable documented reasons for the absences DIMIA may cancel their student Visa; in which case, the student will be required to cancel their course of study and return back to their own country.

If the student is ill, please ensure that you notify the university/college promptly that they will not be attending and keep the university/college regularly updated as regards to the student's condition.

*Please note if the student is ill during school hours and needs to return home for bed rest or to attend a doctor, a school official may contact you and ask you to come to the school to pick up the student.

GENERAL ISSUES

- Please discuss with your students which household duties (if any) are expected of them, i.e. helping to set the table, assisting with the washing up, keeping the bathroom tidy and the cleaning arrangements for their room. Do NOT expect or ask your student to do chores such as cleaning your car, mowing the lawn or baby sitting for you). If they volunteer to help you, that is fine.
- Ask your student to telephone if they will not be home for an evening meal and to ensure they tell you in advance. Discuss the procedure if they wish to bring home a friend, whether or not a friend may stay overnight or if you are prepared to provide a meal for them.
- Students are asked to give a minimum of two weeks notice if they wish to leave a homestay. (This is not always enforceable although Student Services Officers will always assist to try and ensure that the proper notice is given). Please note that if you are hosting an "underage: student, that student may not move from the homestay without permission and assistance of a Student Services Officer. If your student tries to give you notice-always telephone the Student services Officer as soon as possible to let them know of the situation.
- If your student is leaving please settle all outstanding money issues prior to their departure. Telstra and Optus can post a printout of all calls to date if you require an account or the account can be viewed on the internet. If settlement cannot be made prior to the student vacating your home, try to finalise reimbursement within two weeks.
- Students move for many reasons. For the majority it is not the matter of being unhappy. For example, some like to take the opportunity of experiencing different lifestyles in Australia, whilst others want to move closer to their friends, some hosts feel disappointed if a student decides to leave. Sometimes the students are afraid of upsetting their homestay by telling them that they wish to leave. Occasionally this has resulted in the student just packing their bags and going-which causes more distress and ill feelings. Please try to assure your student that you realize they may want to move and that it is OKAY-providing they give you two weeks notice.
- The question whether or not to charge the students when they go away on holiday over term breaks can be a difficult issue. If they are away from the home for longer than one week and if you require payment for the period, we suggest a charge of 50% of the usual weekly rate as a room retaining fee.
- Please always advise us, if the situation in your home changes, for Example if there is to be an extended absence of any member of the family, if you are going on holidays (what arrangements will you make for the care of the student?), illness, hospitalization, or if there are changes from the original situation as detailed on the Homestay Application Form.
- Many students request homestay where there are children as it can be a very rewarding experience for both parties. However, problems can arise when children visit in the student's room. We all need our own space and in most instances students are too polite or scared of giving offence to ask the child to leave their room. We realize it is sometimes difficult to curtail children as they enjoy being with the student. However, it would be appreciated if you would tell your children from the beginning of the arrangement that they should not go into the student's room unless they are invited.
- Baby Sitting-again, students are generally too polite to say NO to this request. However, we suggest that Homestay Hosts use their regular baby sitter or pay your student the going rate if and when it is convenient for them to look after your child.

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General Issues-Continued

- Most students consider themselves as young adults and many of them will have been allowed for greater freedoms at home than those specified by the university/college rules or the Homestay Guides. Please discuss social outings and activities and explain the rules and the rationale. It is important that the students understand that you are responsible to their parents, the school and ultimately to the Departments of Immigration and Educational Services for their safety and welfare. It is also a good idea to explain that you will worry if the student is out late and that although Perth is basically a very safe city, nothing should be taken for granted. Accidents do happen when people are in the wrong place and the wrong time, Please explain that young people are not allowed in Northbridge late in the evenings and at night.
- Discuss and agree an appropriate time for the students to return to your home on Friday and Saturday nights and provide them with your contact telephone number in case they encounter any difficulties that may lead them being late. Discuss the procedure for them to ask your permission to occasionally stay overnight at a friend's home or homestay and the requirement for them to provide you with the friend's address and contact details.
- Discuss a time for lights out. Although many people prefer to study in the small hours explain to your student that it is really important for their studies that they get a good night's sleep and the burning the midnight oil is something they should only do occasionally and not on a regular basis.

UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE ISSUES

STUDENT SUPPORT

- On their arrival at University or College the students attend an Orientation to familiarize themselves with the campus. Students also meet with the head of University/College Executive Dean and are encouraged to talk to them if they encounter any problems with their studies. The Student Services Officer from ISAA is open from 9.00 am until 5.00 pm Monday through to Friday and students are welcome to discuss any issues or problems.

ATTENDANCE

- Lecturers and Teachers take attendance for every single class. If your student is missing from school and you have not phoned the school to advise of the absence, you will be contacted to ask where your student is. If the absenteeism becomes persistent you may be asked to come to the University/College with your student to meet with the head of University/College Executive Dean to discuss the situation.

DISCIPLINE ISSUES

- In more serious cases you will be informed that your student has been suspended or expelled from school and you may be requested to come to school to take them home. The suspension can be for one or several days and the student will not be allowed to return to school until they and you have attended a Suspension Hearing convened by the Executive Dean. When a student is suspended from school the Student Services Officer may also contact the student's parents overseas and in cases of serious incidents will invite them to come to Perth for the Suspension Hearing.

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Our Students are lucky ducks

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ACCOMMODATION AUSTRALIA