

Homestay Guidelines

What you can expect of your hosts

What your hosts will expect of you

General Information

Your hosts will treat you as one of the family, but this means that you will need to fit in with their family routine, which may be different from what you are used to. Some hosts will provide you with written information or “Rules of the House”. These are designed to help you settle into their home. However, if there is anything that you do not understand or are unhappy about, please do not be afraid to ask your host or college staff.

Your Room

This is your own private area for sleeping, relaxing and studying. Your host will clean your room once a week but it is your responsibility to keep it tidy.

Bedrooms in family homes do not usually have their own key. Your privacy will be respected, but (if there is a bedroom key) please do not lock your room when you leave the home.

Heating is normally switched off at night while you sleep.

Friends should not be brought to your room, either to visit or stay overnight, without your host’s permission.

You are not entitled to use the room to accommodate anyone other than yourself (and your room mate if you booked a twin room).

If you wish to play music, or if your room has a TV, please keep the volume low and respect your hosts’ need for quiet, both at bed-time and possibly at other times during the day. If you wish to plug in your own appliances such as computer or radio, please check with your host first. The UK uses appliances with 220 volts, which is different from some other countries such as some Latin American countries. Your host will change your bed sheets and pillowcases once a week.

The Rest of the House

You will be able to use the main living areas of the house such as the sitting and dining rooms. Most students watch TV or converse with the family in one of the communal rooms. If you have booked half board accommodation, your meals will be taken with the family.

Some hosts may have a private study room, which is not for the use of other family members and guests.

Bedrooms are always private.

Your host is responsible for cleaning the communal areas of the house, but you should help keep the home tidy by not leaving your belongings around.

In winter, homes are centrally heated. Heating is normally regulated by a timer and set to go off at certain times of the day when the family is not at home. If you are not warm enough, please discuss this with your host. It is advisable to keep a woolen cardigan or jacket handy for extra warmth in or out of the home. English homes are not usually air-conditioned in summer but the climate is rarely unbearably hot and rooms can be cooled by opening a window.

Bathrooms

English bathrooms may be different from what you are used to in your own country. For example, some may have a hand held shower attachment instead of an overhead shower.

The number of bathrooms per home will vary and, unless you have booked a room with private bathroom, you will usually have to share a bathroom with other people. It is important to be considerate and not to spend a long time bathing or showering if others are waiting to use the bathroom.

As there will be some busy times during the day (such as early in the morning) for bathroom use, it is best to agree bathroom usage times in advance with your hosts. This way you can be sure to be on time for classes and other family members can get to work or school.

Your host is responsible for cleaning the bathrooms and ensuring that they are always clean, but please leave the bathroom as you would wish to find it as there may be someone waiting to use it straight after you. Please take care not to leave a wet floor and your personal toothbrush and other items should be left tidy out of respect for others.

Your host will provide you with a bath towel that will be changed at least once a week, toilet paper and hand washing soap, but you should purchase your own “toiletries” such as toothpaste, body soap/shower gel, shampoo etc. Please do not help yourself to other peoples’ toiletries. Chemist shops such as Boots offer a wide choice of good, inexpensive bath products and cosmetics. Used toilet paper should be disposed of in the toilet (not in the rubbish bin) while feminine sanitary/hygienic products and cotton wool should be disposed of in the bathroom rubbish bin (not in the toilet).

Laundry

If your host has a washing machine they will either allow you to use it once a week or do your laundry for you on a weekly basis, free of charge. It is a good idea to check laundry facilities with your host soon after arrival as some hosts do the weekly wash on a specific day each week. Hosts do not normally do ironing for you but can usually lend you an iron and ironing board.

You should offer to buy washing powder for your laundry if you are doing it yourself. If you need to use the washing machine or have your washing done more than once a week, you should ask your host if this would be possible. Some hosts may make a small charge for additional loads of laundry.

If doing your own laundry, you should ask your host where you can hang your clothes to dry. Clothes should not be dried in bedrooms or bathrooms.

Meals

Meal times in the UK vary from family to family. Generally speaking, English families eat earlier than, for example, in continental Europe. It is important that you check with the family as soon as you arrive, what time breakfast and dinner are served. If these times conflict with your study schedule, you should discuss this with your host. If you have booked half board accommodation and cannot get home on time on a certain evening, you should telephone your host to advise them. They may be able to leave your dinner ready for you to reheat when you return.

Breakfast times are normally arranged according to the time that your host has to get to work. If breakfast time is too early or late for you, you may have to prepare your own breakfast. This should be discussed with your host who will explain where to find the breakfast ingredients. It is important to note that few English families still provide a traditional English cooked breakfast. Your accommodation includes Continental Breakfast. English food may be different from what you are used to. It may be necessary for you to adapt to the new flavours or the way in which food is cooked. It is unlikely that you will be provided with bottled (mineral) water as most British families drink the tap water, which is safe and palatable.

Dinners will usually consist of meat or fish with vegetables (unless you have requested to stay with a vegetarian family) followed by dessert, fruit or cheese and coffee. If there is anything you particularly dislike or cannot eat, please discuss this with your host. If you should require help with homework, please do not bring books to the dinner table. It is better to ask for help either before or after meal times.

Continental Breakfast normally consists of fruit juice, cereal, toast or bread with butter and marmalade or jam and tea or coffee. Cheese, yoghurt, fruit and cold meat are not normally part of a Continental breakfast in England, and hosts are not expected to provide it. If you should wish to purchase extra breakfast items for yourself, please check with your host first and arrange to keep them in the refrigerator.

Lunch is not provided either on weekdays or at weekends unless special arrangements have been made in advance.

Please note, that you will not be entitled to use the kitchen except to make tea or coffee, unless you have booked self-catering accommodation

If you have booked bed and breakfast accommodation, you are expected to eat your lunch and dinner outside. However, some hosts will permit "light kitchen use" by prior arrangement only. This is normally restricted to microwave use, boiling pasta or reheating of ready meals and not major cooking such as frying or roasting. If your host permits light kitchen use, you should first discuss what time you may use the kitchen, which will depend upon the host's schedule. If you need to keep food in the refrigerator, please ask your host's permission and restrict it to small quantities. **You are strongly advised NOT to bring food which requires refrigeration from your home country, as there is no guarantee that your host will have the space to store it. Please note: it is illegal to import meat products into the UK.**

Please do not take any food from your host's kitchen without asking first. Your host will provide you with the meals booked but this does not include snacks throughout the day.

If your host allows light kitchen use, this facility should be used to prepare your own meal only. Please do not invite friends to eat with you. You will be expected to wash all dishes, pots and pans and clean the kitchen thoroughly after use.

Please do not store or eat food in your bedroom without first checking with your host.

Telephone

Your host's telephone is for you to receive calls from family and close friends only. To preserve your host's privacy, please do not give your host's telephone number to casual acquaintances made in London. If you need to make and receive a large number of social calls, you are advised to consider purchasing a "pay-as-you-go" mobile (cell) phone once you have arrived.

It is advisable to check with your host on the earliest and latest times each day, which are convenient for you to receive calls and then advise your family and friends accordingly. In order not to inconvenience your host, you are advised to limit the number of calls you receive and restrict them to a reasonable length, so as not to tie up the telephone lines for long periods.

You are not entitled to use your host's telephone to make outgoing calls or to connect to the Internet without permission. There are many public telephones and inexpensive Internet café's all over London.

Some hosts will permit you to make outgoing calls using a phone card to call out (which can be purchased easily at many outlets in London). Please ask permission to do this. It is, however, advisable to make your calls from public telephones outside the home. **Unlike in some countries, local calls are not free in the U.K.**

Late Arrivals

If you are planning to stay overnight with a friend or return home very late, please advise your host so that they do not worry. When returning home late, please be as quiet as possible so as not to disturb your host. It is usually inadvisable to use the kitchen or to shower or bathe late at night as this may also cause disturbance.

Keys & Security

Upon arrival you will be given a key to the family home. Please keep this key safe and do not lend it to anyone or make additional copies. Your host's address should NOT be attached to the keys in case they get lost. If you should lose your key, you should report it to your host immediately. Please take great care to lock the door of the home behind you whenever you go out. **If you are uncertain as to how the locking system works, please ask.**

Valuables

Neither your host nor Eden House College are responsible for your personal possessions. You are advised to take out a student insurance policy (the college can assist you with the purchase of an inexpensive, fully comprehensive plan) to cover you in case your belongings are lost or stolen in or out of the home.

If you have brought valuable items such as jewellery, computers, cameras or cash with you, you are advised to ask your host where they can be stored for safekeeping. You are not advised to keep large amounts of cash in your room or on your person. If you are staying for a fairly long period, the college can assist you in opening a bank account, please see us at Reception. Otherwise, you may wish to consider bringing travellers cheques or converting your cash into them after arrival.

Friends

If you should wish to invite a friend over to visit, you must first ask your host's permission. Please bear in mind that the entertaining of friends by students in a family home is not an entitlement of your stay as some families feel it is an invasion of their privacy. If they allow you to have visitors, they will expect your guest to leave by 11 p.m. (or earlier).

Conversation with the Host

Hosts are aware that you would like to practice your English and are happy to help you with your English conversation and sometimes with homework. Please remember that hosts are not teachers and as some of them have busy schedules they may not always have free time to talk at the time most convenient to you. For example, if your school finishes late and you do not return home until 10 p.m. after dinner is over, your host may be tired and preparing to go to bed. You are advised to discuss schedules with your host in order to plan your time together.

You are asked not to discuss rates of pay with your host, as this is not considered to be polite. If you have any queries about payment, or wish to extend your stay, please contact the college reception.

Help & Assistance

Your host will be happy to offer you assistance with the following in their local area:

Transportation (underground, bus routes, travel cards)

Local doctor, medical problems and medicines

Leisure facilities such as sports clubs, gymnasiums and public swimming pools

Banks, Post offices, Library, Internet Café

Pharmacy, Supermarket

We wish you a very pleasant stay !



"expect a brighter future"