



RANGIORA NEW LIFE SCHOOL

International Programme

INFORMATION FOR HOMESTAY FAMILIES

Introduction:

Housing an International Student can be a very rewarding experience. Students value the opportunity of conversing in English, being involved in daily life and learning and having the company of other people.

Most International Students living in a homestay will wish to share in many aspects of family life. However, not being familiar with our culture and life style, they may not know how best to do this and may feel hesitant and appear quite shy or be difficult to communicate with in other ways. Hopefully, the homestay experience will bring about intercultural awareness and mutual understanding and learning for the benefit of both parties.

The following information is to help ensure that both the homestay provider and student gain maximum benefit from the homestay experience. The aim of this information is not to stereotype the student. Individual differences exist in all cultures as they exist in our own and should be appreciated.

The Role of the Homestay Family

What is expected of a Homestay Family?

What role have you agreed to play?

Expectations:

The initial settling in period requires adjustments and compromise for both parties.

The students may well be experiencing:

Chronic homesickness (may have never been away from home before)
Difficulty in communicating and
Culture shock (a completely different way of life)

The home stay provider also has to adjust to having another person in their home. Some students adjust easily and may experience only a few of these problems.

Generally after 7-10 days, life settles into a routine and runs smoothly. Some homestay providers make life-long friendships with their students, often travelling to visit ex-students in their home country, etc. For children, having an overseas student in the home can be very beneficial as they are exposed to other cultures and languages.

Newly arrived students need time to settle in - for many it is their first venture away from their families. They may seem quiet and reserved and spend time in their rooms. These are all signs of homesickness and culture shock and if they continue after 7-10 days, you may wish to telephone us for help in assisting the student to overcome any initial problems.

To play your role most successfully for yourself and your student, you should be willing to face a challenge. The students should be accepted as a member of your family during their time with you and as such should be included in any activity in which your family is taking part. This includes even such basics as visiting the supermarket. You should share your own culture and explain it, when necessary. You may be expected to accept behaviour that is strange and different.

Your lifestyle is often vastly different to theirs and adjusting can be difficult for some. Perhaps the biggest hurdle is communicating. The student often does not have the opportunity to use English in her/his home country, so using the spoken words takes time. If you experience problems communicating verbally, it can be of enormous help to write down what you are trying to say. Students often have a good understanding of the written word and can resort to the dictionary to translate. Gradually, communication between you and the student will improve.

It is most important to be supportive and to try not to show any signs of impatience, particularly initially, as this is very unsettling for the student

and can set them back a great deal. Please use simple English and speak slowly and try not to use idioms, slang, etc. and do not speak loudly or yell at the student.

If for any reason you find you are having difficulties with your student, for example personality clashes, excessive untidiness, lateness, etc. please feel free to phone us to discuss the problem. We place a great deal of importance on homestay providers as well as the students being happy and content.

Our aim is that the experience of being a homestay provider will be a rewarding one for both parties and we understand that in some cases and for a variety of reasons, it is necessary for the student to relocate.

You should not feel concerned if after mediation we have to relocate the student.

Responsibilities:

We are looking for Homestay providers who are compatible with people from other countries and who can offer a friendly, happy and relaxed atmosphere in their home, treating the students as members of the household.

Clean, warm comfortable homes, in particular the kitchen, bathroom and toilet and adequate heating. Furnished bedroom with a firm bed and comfortable mattress, adequate lighting, bedding and storage.

Students Arrival at your Home:

Everyone is likely to be excited. Even so, your student may be very tired and suffering from jet lag. Not only does he/she have to adjust to a time difference of several hours, but also he may have been travelling for some time. Some will adjust quickly, but others will be hungry at odd hours and need a few days of extra rest. Remember that in most cases, this is the first experience of a Western lifestyle that the students encounter. They know a lot about western culture, but this knowledge is based mainly on an American model. Be prepared for your student to feel rather disoriented until he/she becomes used to your family routine.

To avoid some initial shyness, make sure you introduce the student to

members of the family, (even family pets) so they know names and relationships. Make it clear from the outset what you would prefer to be called. Show the student around the house and garden, tell him/her where the necessary things are and explain how everything works. Show them how to operate the shower and where to find light switches, towels, etc. On their first night it is a good idea to turn down their bed, so they know where to get into it. There have been cases where students have slept on top of the bed at night.

Remember that your student will have come from a climate in the opposite season to New Zealand. They may be feeling the hot or the cold more than you realise. During the winter an electric blanket on the student's bed would be much appreciated.

In general Asian families do not have many children. A student in their teens is unlikely to have had very much experience with young children and may take some time to feel comfortable with them.

The same can be true with family pets.

Tell your student the normal family routines such as what time breakfast is eaten, when people leave for work or school and when they come home. Show them where things are kept and let them know what they may help themselves to, such as juice, fruit or biscuits.

Household Norms:

Every family has rules. These may not be written or even spoken within your family but over the years that your family has been together, you will have established a way of interacting that everyone understands and takes for granted.

Do you have an unwritten "timetable" for who uses the bathroom at what time in the morning? (Expect Asian students to need more time in the bathroom and to use more water than you may be used to). Do you have specific times for meal times? Do you expect your student to help with the dishes or other chores around the house?

Prior to the student's arrival, think about the things that are important to you and perhaps make a list, which you can then talk about together. This would also be an opportune time to talk over transport arrangements and so on. If your student is walking or biking to school it would be a good idea to accompany them on the first trip. If you are transporting your student by private car, show them where they will be picked up.

If your student is taking a bus to school (with your children) make sure to provide them with the bus tickets throughout the time of their stay.

Let them know when you expect them home for a meal and discuss procedures for getting in touch with you if there is a change of plan. Write your telephone number and address on a card that they can carry with them, in case they need to contact you urgently. Discuss the procedure if they wish to bring a friend home for dinner and whether or not a friend may stay overnight, etc.

If during the student's stay something does bother you, perhaps something little such as not hanging up the towel after a shower, don't hesitate to talk about it. By letting it pass you may find that small issues become big problems.

Many students request homestay with children, as it can be very rewarding for both parties. A minor problem that sometimes arises is when children spend a lot of time in the student's room. We all need our own space and in most instances students are too polite to ask the child to leave their room. We realise it is difficult to curtail children as they enjoy being with the students - if you sense this may be the situation in your house it would be appreciated if you could ask the children not to go into the student's room unless invited.

Food:

As mentioned previously, one of the responsibilities of the homestay is to provide meals during the student's stay. In some Asian families, the largest meal is breakfast. You may find that your student is most hungry in the morning.

We suggest that you send your student with a packed lunch for the first few days and then discuss with him what he likes or dislikes to eat, whether he needs more or less. We suggest that each day you give your student a sandwich with some kind of meat inside or even egg. Most Asian students do not eat jam or peanut butter sandwiches.

For their evening meal they will eat whatever your family is having. You are not expected to prepare anything different for the student unless your student does not eat beef. Part of the experience of the culture exchange is trying new foods and most students enjoy this, but still prefer to have rice and noodles occasionally.

Most Asian students are used to serving themselves from dishes on the

that they do not have to eat what is on their plate, just for the sake of politeness.

Some students may also like to cook an Asian style meal for their host family. Vegetables and some sauces are available from local supermarkets.

Explain what steps you would like your student to take with their dirty laundry. Keep in mind that some students (especially girls) will not be used to having their underwear washed and hung on an outside line.

The more help you can give with the practical problem, the more at ease your student will feel. But don't be surprised if you have to repeat things a lot of times. Early information overload can cause forgetfulness, especially on a weary brain. Remember they are children and need constant reminding.

The Language Barrier:

All of the students who come to New Zealand have learnt some English, but they have little confidence in speaking. Please ensure that you speak slowly and clearly, especially at the beginning of their stay.

Some confusion can arise when students are asked a question such as "you don't want to do that, do you?" The student is unsure whether to answer yes or no. Instead try asking the same question "Do you want to do that?" to get the desired response. To add to the confusion, when an Asian student answers yes to a question, this may be their way of affirming that they have heard the question, not necessarily that they wish to answer in the affirmative. This sounds like an insurmountable communication problem, but with patience and a sense of humour, it's all part of the fun of hosting a student.

It also pays to remember that people from different cultures perceive the same situation differently. What constitutes good manners is at the top of the list. Polite silence may be interpreted as being uncommunicative; hesitation about asking personal questions may be interpreted as a lack of interest in the other person. Students may not say "please" and "thank you" when you think they should. These magic words that are instilled in most children from infancy are simply not as important in some cultures, or on the other hand the student may almost embarrass you by politeness.

When your student returns home each day, he may go directly to the bedroom and close the door, instead of coming to the kitchen or family area to chat with whoever is at home. In your culture this may be viewed as rudeness, but it is not intended that way; Asian people in general, value their privacy and maybe very reserved. If this is the case the best approach maybe to let them see the way the rest of the household behaves and invite them to join in, without putting any pressure on the situation.

Insurance:

Students are fully covered in the event of illness or accident, so never hesitate to take your student to your family or duty Doctor if necessary. If you student is not well enough too attend class please advise the school immediately.

In the case that the student needs to go to see the Doctor please contact school to arrange and pay for the Doctor's visit and prescription. The School will be reimbursed from the insurance company later.

Religion:

Asian students religions vary. Some have been brought up in the Shinto religion, others follow Buddhism, many have no religious background. If you take part in church activities, invite your student to come along, but do not be offended if your student declines, as to attend a foreign church may go against their own beliefs.

Money:

Students may bring their own pocket money (for their own personal use) as many Asians enjoy shopping. However most of them will have their allowances managed and issued by their agent or group coordinator.

Please do not involve students in financial matters. The agent or the school should be contacted directly regarding any re-imbursements for additional expenses.

Telephone:

International students between the ages 11-13 years are required to keep in regular contact with parents (at least once a week). We also require each student to keep a record of these contacts by writing down the dates of contact in a notebook which will be viewed from time to time by either Donna McCormick or another member of staff at the school. Homestay Providers are not required to pay for these communications but we would appreciate it very much if you could help facilitate these contacts and encourage your student to keep the records in their notebook up to date.

Summary:

If the situation in your home changes, please advise the school. For example if there is to be an extended absence from home, going on holiday, illness, hospitalisation, changes in household members, etc. It is very important that we are aware of any changes from the original situation.

We hope your experience as a homestay family to one of our International Students is a happy one. If we can help you in any other way or answer any questions, please come and see us at:

Rangiora New Life School:

Donna McCormick - 313-6332 or home 313-5129

Gregg Weaver – 313-6332 or home 312-2628