



WAIKATO INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

HOST FAMILY GUIDELINES FOR THE CARE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



Dear Host Family,

Congratulations on your decision to host an International student! You are joining the number of host families who have hosted our students over the years and have had a pleasant journey of cultural exchange, friendships and fun. Hosting is a valuable experience for both families and students, as it offers insight into the lifestyles of a different culture.

Having students from another country live with your family can be an exciting and inspiring experience; but it also has its challenges and at times hosts and students may experience clashes in culture or lifestyle. These may be due to large or small differences, or merely different styles of communication. That is why we have produced this Guide to help you know what to expect when hosting students and how you can help your student adjust to life with your family.

This Guide contains important information and advice about what to do when the student arrives, cultural differences between New Zealand and other countries, and information on how to get support if you face challenges or difficulties. We encourage you to read this Guide thoroughly, so that you know what the student may be expecting, and also so that you may prepare for whatever experiences you may encounter. We want to assist families to resolve any difficulties associated with their student that can arise from time to time. A warm, friendly and flexible approach to your student will ensure an enjoyable experience.

We suggest that you keep this Guide for future reference, and sincerely hope this will be a richly rewarding experience for all of you, your family and friends.

Warm regards,

The Homestay Coordinator

Waikato Institute of Education (WIE)

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ABOUT WAIKATO INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

Waikato Institute of Education (WIE) was founded in 2003 with its mission to provide better educational services for its students and stakeholders. For several years now, WIE has been one of New Zealand's leading English language schools providing English Courses in New Zealand. WIE is well situated in picturesque Hamilton, one of New Zealand's fastest growing cities; with a population of over 200,000 Hamilton provides the perfect environment for study and leisure.

THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The Code of Practice was introduced by the Government as part of the Education Act 1989 and is an agreement with Education Providers to ensure the wellbeing of international students in New Zealand. The purpose of the Code of Practice is to provide procedures and processes to make sure that international students are safe, well informed, and properly cared for during their stay. Being a signatory of the Code, Waikato Institute of Education must comply with the Code's regulations, and make sure all host families fulfil the requirements of a host family as stated in the Code.

A copy of the code is available from our office, or you can access it on the internet at www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/international.

Should you wish to discuss any part of your, or the school's obligations as outlined in the Code of Practice, please feel free to contact our Homestay Co-ordinator on (07) 838 2450 or email homestay@wie.ac.nz.

THE HOST FAMILY ROLE

The role of the host family is to provide students with a warm friendly and authentic taste of New Zealand family life. This is done through allowing the student to participate in your normal, day-to-day family activities. The family provides a rich context to the learning experience.

No two homestays are the same. The types of families, homes and relationships are all very different but successful homestays have the same common ingredients:

- Comfort
- Communication
- Care

General expectations of the host family are that you should:

- provide a warm, friendly home environment.
- respect the student and make them feel part of the family.
- ensure your student's safety and well-being.
- encourage your student to speak English at all times.
- be sensitive to the cultural differences between New Zealand and your student's country of origin.
- make small changes to your daily routine to accommodate your student (small changes only, transport assistance or extra rice for example; you are not expected to cook speciality Asian food!).
- notify WIE of any changes or additions to your household, and if there are any concerns or problems.

You are expected to provide your student:

- 3 meals per day, 7 days a week, with access to snacks
- a private, well lit, comfortable room that is well ventilated; warm in winter and cool in summer
- clean bedding and towels that are changed regularly
- a desk and chair suitable for study
- storage for clothes and personal items
- adequate heating i.e. heater or electric blanket
- bathroom/shower access
- access to laundry or laundry done regularly

You are NOT expected to:

- pay for student's toll or mobile phone calls
- provide internet access
- offer accommodation to student's friends or relatives
- comply with unreasonable requests

HOW TO BE A GOOD HOST FAMILY

1. Act like a family. This may sound obvious, but students really want families who act like a family. They eat dinner together around a table (not always in front of the television and not all at different times). They engage in conversation. They may not always agree, but they do listen to one another. They spend evenings and weekends together and understand the value of “family time”.

2. Know that safety and security come first. A good host family understands that it is their responsibility to keep the student they’re hosting safe and secure. This means that they set reasonable rules to help keep the student safe. This may include things like setting a curfew (particularly with younger students), getting the student to check in with you before late excursions with friends and giving advice on safety in the local area such as avoiding certain areas of town. An ideal host family understands that having and following safety rules is a good thing.

3. Include the student in family life. The ideal host family thinks of their homestay student as part of the family. They include the student in dinner conversations, family outings and activities. The ideal host family should see their role as both giving and receiving. In addition to the fee they receive to host the student, they also receive a tremendous opportunity to learn about another culture, as well as the chance to learn how to host international guests. In turn, they give their student the opportunity to experience life as part of their own family, offering a safe place to live, support, encouragement, opportunities to learn new things in the informal setting of the family unit.

4. Know when not to include the homestay student. This may sound counter-intuitive but one difference between a good host family and a great host family is that great host families know when not to include the home stay student. They understand that while they want to make the host student feel like part of the family, they also keep in mind that they are still a guest. All families have their ups and downs. Great host families don’t burden their home stay students with things like obligatory visits to the hospital to see a terminally ill grand parent. They also avoid having heated arguments in front of the home stay student. Ideal host families shield their home stay student from distressing experiences, understanding that the student is experiencing his or her own stress from culture shock, missing their own family back home and stress from school. While it is normal for family members to disagree from time to time, the best host families understand that “domestic drama” does not make for a pleasant home stay experience.

5. Know how to have good wholesome fun. Families who do activities together such as play board games, enjoy sports, go for walks and have family gatherings such as dinners and birthday parties are ideal. Together, these create long-lasting happy and warm memories. The best host families strike a balance between work (including schoolwork), responsibilities around the house and time to relax and have some fun together as a family. These families understand that spending time together doing fun activities creates opportunities for sharing, laughter and positive bonding. And, that in the end, happy memories are the best souvenir the student can take with them when they leave.

General Household Running

Every family has their own routines, so please explain these to your student when they first arrive, as it helps them to settle in when they feel included in family routines.

- It is useful to explain to your student what time you have your meals and where food, cups, plates etc are kept. Students must not make arrangements to go out with friends without notifying the host family and gaining their approval first.
- Please explain to students that it is their responsibility to keep their room clean and tidy, and make sure that they keep all their valuables safely in their room or suitcase.
- Please make sure that your student has privacy, and that their possessions are safe. If you have small children, please don't allow them to touch the student's belongings, as there may be things such as medicine etc. which may be harmful to young children in their luggage.
- Please don't encourage your student to purchase things for your family members while you are out shopping.
- Please make sure prior to finishing their stay, that your student has not forgotten anything, as it is often more costly to send items back to their country by post, than the original purchase price.

Meals and Food

All meals are included in the homestay fee. Students require three meals per day; breakfast, a packed lunch and dinner. Long-term students may wish to make their own lunch to take to school/university, so please allow them access to food.

Also, please make sure that there is rice and noodles available for them to cook for themselves, should they want to, or for your family too. Please teach students appropriate table manners in New Zealand, as different cultures have different table etiquette. Ask your student to inform you in advance if they will not be home for dinner.

SETTING GUIDELINES

The following questions have been provided as suggestions to help you to settle your student into a New Zealand household. These will also help set the ground rules and familiarise the student with their host family and local environment.

Some questions you may like to ask your homestay student:

- What time do you usually get up?
- What time do you usually have a bath or shower (morning or night)?
- Do you want to wash your own laundry?
- What time do you usually eat breakfast?
- What time do you usually go to bed?
- What foods do you prefer not to eat?
- Is there any special information that I should know about? (E.g. allergies, medication, etc.)

Some questions your homestay student may wish to ask you:

- May I use the phone? What is the latest time I can receive phone calls?
- How should I pay for the phone calls?
- When and how late can my music be played?
- When and for how long may I watch TV?
- Are there any dangerous areas near here?
- May I invite friends over to stay the night?
- What time should I be home if I go out at night?
- What time should I call by if I am not coming home for dinner?
- Are there any special house rules that I should know about?

FINANCE – WHO PAYS?

When a student first moves in with their homestay family, WIE is responsible for making payment for the first four weeks of the student's homestay. After four weeks, it is the responsibility of the student to pay their homestay family, two weeks in advance (unless under 18 years old or in special circumstances). If the student is under 18 years old, WIE will still be responsible for making homestay payments throughout the duration of the students' homestay period.

Homestay families are paid by direct deposit into a nominated bank account on the first weekday after the students' arrival. Payments are made only by automatic transfer into a nominated bank account.

Who pays for what?

- Telephone - all non-local phone calls (international, STD, mobile) are to be paid by the student. Please allow students to call home, either as a collect call, or if you have a long-term student, then tell them that their telephone account must be paid once a month, including mobile phone calls. You can also suggest that they buy a phone card which is an extremely cheap option for them. These are available at most dairies and supermarkets.
- Internet – if internet access is available at your home, it is likely the student will want to use it. It is up to you whether you want to charge a little extra for usage (we recommend \$10 p/w) but this is an arrangement between you and the student. Please inform your student that the internet is for study and email purposes only, otherwise they may use it for other purposes such as watching videos or online games.
- Public Transport – International students will cover their own public transport costs – they will need to purchase a BUSIT card so they can catch the bus to and from school.
- Outings/Excursions - Families are not expected to pay for homestay students on family outings etc. Should your family go out for a meal however (i.e. McDonalds), the student should not be expected to pay as the weekly cost of homestay does include all meals. Families are asked to use their own discretion in this matter.

VACATIONS/HOLIDAYS

Host families are asked not to be absent at the beginning of their student's stay. Should you decide to go on a short holiday later on, there are a couple of possibilities: invite the student to join the vacation or provision the household for the student to remain home alone.

Please note that Under 18 year olds **MUST NOT** be left home alone. If your student is under 18 and you plan on going away for a night or longer without taking the student, please let us know so we can arrange for temporary accommodation.

Vacations with the Student (Voluntary)

If a host family wants to invite a student to join a vacation, it is a good idea to consider and discuss the financial arrangements prior to the final decision. Hosts are responsible to cover the cost of meals; however, if the vacation entails only restaurant meals, they will need to consider the additional costs and perhaps suggest the possibility of the student contributing to the additional costs. The same principle could be applied to accommodation; students could be asked to contribute to costs over and above the normal expenses at home.

Vacations without the Student

If you agree that it is preferable for the student to remain in the family home and not join the vacation, hosts are responsible to provision the household with food and sundries necessary for the duration the student will be on their own. Again, communication with the student is necessary. For example, ask the student what they are comfortable with or capable of cooking, or provide some previously made meals for them to reheat.

Arrangements should also be made for unforeseen expenses. Hosts could leave emergency money, or a contact to obtain funds from, or ask the student to retain receipts for any incidental expenses to be reimbursed. Depending on the maturity or comfort level of the individual student, it may also be a good idea to consider having a friend or neighbour drop by to check on them or visit with them on a regular basis.

Student going on Holiday

If a student plans on going away for a period of time and wishes to return to the same host family upon returning, the homestay family can ask the student to pay a weekly fee in order to ensure that his/her place will still be available upon return. We recommend a fee of \$50 per week, however please use your discretion as to the amount charged, keeping in mind the student would not be consuming food or electricity while they are away.

INSURANCE/MEDICAL PROCEDURES

All students in New Zealand on a student visa are required to purchase student insurance. WIE's preferred provider is Southern Cross, which offers additional benefits to students such as access to a 24/7 Helpline.

If your student is under 18, please contact our office immediately if they feel unwell or are exhibiting signs of psychological or emotional distress. Phone the Homestay Co-ordinator on (07) 838 2450, and arrangements will be made to seek Medical Treatment.

If your student is over 18 years, WIE recommends you take your student to your local GP. Please tell your student they should pay for the consultation and they will be refunded by their insurance provider on production of their receipt.

If it is an Emergency all students must be taken to Anglesea Clinic or in serious cases Waikato Hospital Accident and Emergency department (or any other emergency medical hospital) and you must notify WIE immediately.

COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Surveys of homestay families have revealed that when difficulties occurred most families were able to deal with them, or in time the problems sorted themselves out. If you have a problem, you should make every effort to resolve the difficulty directly with your student. If the matter cannot be resolved, you or your student should contact the WIE office on (07) 838 2450 or email homestay@wie.ac.nz.

Please note: at the end of every program, students are given the opportunity to fill in an evaluation form.

The most common difficulties experienced by homestay families are:

- Too quiet or too shy; wouldn't talk to us
- Too demanding (asked so many questions all the time)
- Rude/sulky
- Homesickness
- Immaturity
- Shower/hygiene problems
- Unsure how much freedom to give (applicable to over 18y/o students)
- Too studious/not studious at all or too social/out till late every night

Freedom to Come and Go (Dangers of Living in a Foreign Country)

Of prime importance are the safety and well-being of our homestay students. Other countries may be safer than New Zealand and students may expect the same here or they may be naive to dangers. Some young people are relatively free and safe to move anywhere in their country by themselves. Unfortunately, this is not entirely the case here and WIE warns homestay students to avoid travelling after dark on public transport or by themselves. If students are out and about after dark then they must have assistance from the host family or use taxis.

You should treat your student as though he/she is a member of the family/ household and apply the same standards as you would to a natural member of the family.

Be suitably strict with your homestay student when giving permission for outings, taking into consideration their age, maturity and reliability. It is quite acceptable for students to visit other students on their program and as long as both families agree, it is possible for a student to sleep over at another homestay family's home.

On some occasions a student or small group may decide to travel out of town for the weekend. If the homestay student is under the age of 18, permission must be obtained from the student's caregiver or guardian. The homestay host is not expected to provide any assistance by way of transport, etc. but they may offer to help.

WHAT STUDENTS ARE TOLD ABOUT LIVING WITH A HOST FAMILY

Homestay students are encouraged to approach their homestay host if they have a concern or problem and to work it through with their host. They are told:

- Not to consume alcohol or tobacco, if underage, or drugs at any stage.
- To abide by New Zealand law at all times.
- To let you know where they are going and approximately what time they will be home. They must phone you if they are not coming home for dinner or if they will be late home. If they will be returning home late in the evening, please remind them to take a taxi, rather than walk.
- If they are going to stay out overnight they must let you know where they will be staying and leave a contact phone number for you (NB if your student is under 18, they cannot stay out overnight).
- To confirm with you if they can invite friends home for a meal or to visit.
- Homestay families are not running a hotel service so they should assist with the washing of dishes, keeping their room tidy, assisting with laundry etc.
- Most homes in New Zealand do not have unlimited internet bandwidth, so if provided internet access, they should be considerate when using it and not use it for playing online games or large downloads without asking the homestay first.
- They should speak English at their homestay at all times.
- They must offer to pay for themselves on excursions/outings etc.
- That all household rules apply to them as they do to other members of the host family.

GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

The best way of ensuring appropriate behaviour is to abide by New Zealand law, and exercise common sense and caution with regard to the homestay student in your care.

In exercising “common sense and caution”, families should take into account the significant cultural differences between their own ideas of appropriate behaviour and those of their students.

Families are reminded that, for the purposes of New Zealand laws prohibiting sexual harassment in relation to accommodation, the behaviour of family members towards the homestay student is judged by the student’s reasonable perception and interpretation of that behaviour, and not by the intention of the family member.

Examples of behaviour that may be deemed to be discriminatory or constitute sexual harassment are:

- acting towards, or speaking to a person in a manner which threatens or vilifies that person;
- making jokes, suggestive comments or offensive gestures related to a person’s race, colour, ethnic origin, disability, gender or sexual characteristics;
- distribution or display of material (including through e-mail) which may be offensive, such as sexually explicit posters or pictures, racist or sexist jokes or cartoons;
- persistent questions about a person’s private life;
- personal comments about appearance, size, clothing;
- demands for sexual favours, either directly or by implication;
- unwanted and deliberate physical contact;
- indecent assault or other criminal offences.

While it is not our intention to stifle the warm and friendly relationship between families and students, you should be aware that problems in this area do arise from time to time, that there may be a liability, and you should exercise all appropriate care and consideration towards your students.

CULTURAL ORIENTATION POINTS FOR HOST FAMILIES

The following are points that have arisen previously that highlight some common cultural differences between international students and New Zealanders.

- You may need to explain to your student how to use the sheets on the bed and to show them where the wet towels go, or they may turn up in some very peculiar spots! Some students may be used to sleeping on the floor so you should show them how to sleep between the sheets, and pull the bed covers up; otherwise they may sleep on top of the bed without any covers, and may get cold. Also, please show them where you keep spare blankets etc.
- Some homestay students may be very shy about having their underwear washed so they may never bring it out. If you notice this, please show them how to use the washing machine and where to dry their clothes.
- Sometimes, students not used to western-style bathrooms can quite innocently flood the bathroom causing extensive damage to carpets and fittings. Please show your student upon their arrival at your home how to operate the shower/bath, and explain to them about our hot water system. It may be necessary to give them a maximum time limit, as some students tend to use a lot of hot water.
- Homestay students often comment on how good communication with homestay fathers can be, and have even said that, after a 3-4 week course, they feel they know their homestay fathers better than they do their own natural fathers after a lifetime of living together.

Tips Regarding Middle Eastern Students

- Students from Asian and Middle Eastern countries are generally not used to eating a lot of bread (e.g. sandwiches) and they may crave meals with rice. Although you do not have to cook rice every day, your student will appreciate it if you serve rice occasionally.
- Most of the toilets in Saudi Arabia are 'Bidet-style', which are low bowls in which the user has a hose, rather than paper, to clean themselves. A lot of students will not have used a western-style toilet before, so you may need to explain to your student how to use the toilet facilities correctly, to avoid wet floors and confusion about what the paper is there for.
- In many cultures, time is viewed very flexibly. While this may be appropriate in those cultural settings, it is often not so here in New Zealand. It may lead to students not being on time for meals and other events, causing problems for their host. It is important to communicate to the student that it can be seen as being impolite and inconsiderate if they do not adhere to the time commitments they make. This will usually alter such behaviour.

- Muslim students will require food to be “Halal” and will not eat pork or pork by-products. However, within these requirements, individual students will have their own preferences, so the host needs to be aware that not all cultural food will appeal to all students of that culture. (For information on what Halal is, please ask the Homestay Coordinator for an Guide to Islam Fact Sheet.)
- Students from some cultures will not tolerate dogs or cats at all. They believe that animals are ‘unclean’ and should be kept outside, if they are to be kept at all. If you have a pet it is important to declare it. There are plenty of students who enjoy animals but it is unfair on both host and pet for the inside animal to be put outside when they are not used to it. It is important too that the animal is restrained on a student’s arrival. There is nothing worse than being greeted by an over exuberant pet jumping up at you when you first arrive at the Homestay home. The animal may be friendly but this can be terrifying to a student unused to pets behaving in such a way.

Tips Regarding Asian Students

- Students from Asian countries are generally not used to eating a lot of bread (e.g. sandwiches) and they may crave meals with rice. Sometimes an Asian student will compare rice to meat and expect meat at all three meals. It should be politely explained that bread is the comparison to rice, not meat. When first greeting a student, the host should ask them what foods they enjoy. Although you do not have to cook rice every day, your student will appreciate it if you serve rice occasionally.
- Generally students from Asian cultures don’t like sandwiches for lunch everyday. Leftovers are an easy way for the student to have a hot lunch as microwaves are available for students to use at school.
- Many Asian students have mentioned their concern at how some families wash their dishes. In Asia, dishes are rinsed thoroughly as Asians believe their detergents to be quite toxic and hence must always be rinsed. Many students are alarmed if dishes are not rinsed thoroughly.
- Asians answer positive questions the same way as we do in English, but they answer negative questions quite differently. Fluent English speakers generally ask negative questions, for instance “You won’t have more to eat?” An Asian person will reply “Yes” if they don’t want more food and “No” if they do. They agree or disagree literally with the question being asked. To avoid confusion, it is best to avoid using negative questions when conversing with your Asian student.
- Japanese people tend to fall asleep anywhere and especially when travelling by bus or car. They are not bored, just napping.
- Although they may warm to the task later, Asian students at first will feel a little awkward about hugging or any other kind of physical affection expressed between family members. From about the age of 11-12 all such contact

ceases in Asian families and is replaced by bowing or simple acknowledgements so Asian students generally will not expect physical contact of any nature from homestay parents. Host fathers, in particular, should exercise discretion and be aware that students often remain confused or uncomfortable with any degree of physical contact. Despite all this, many homestay students (more so the girls) will often start to feel quite emotional about their imminent departure a few days before they are due to leave.) Your homestay student will be struck by the amount of time and the range of household activities that New Zealand fathers engage in with their families, even after coming home from work. Fathers helping with household chores get a particular mention (and a nod of approval) in post course questionnaires.

- Whereas Westerners are encouraged to express their opinions readily Japanese people are generally more modest and reserved about this, preferring not to stand out or appear 'confrontational'. Remember that in the beginning they will not always feel confident enough to ask for food, drink, etc, so offer it to them. The girls can also feel quite sensitive about having the homestay mother do their laundry so indicate that a separate bag is available for her to put dirty laundry in and that the washing will be collected for washing on certain days.
- Some Asian nationalities, such as Koreans and Chinese, may be less reticent about making their opinions known and may appear to speak more bluntly.
- You may be surprised if your student forgets to say “please” when asking for something, and “thank you” when something has been done or given to them. This is because in most Asian cultures, family members are not expected to keep thanking each other.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Occasionally problems or difficulties do arise in home hosting. If host families have any issues in relation to their student, they should first speak to a WIE staff member.

Families will be encouraged to discuss the issue with their student if appropriate. If the issue is not resolved, WIE staff will speak to both parties to try and resolve the problem. If the situation is unsatisfactory for either the host family or the student, or the problem cannot be resolved, the student will be removed from the homestay.

If the problem does not relate to the homestay student, WIE staff will discuss the issue with the host family and endeavour to reach a resolution. There are complaints forms and available from the WIE office.

EMERGENCIES

WIE has responsibility in the event of emergencies and accidents during and outside of school hours when the student is in a homestay family. This means that WIE should be contacted as soon as possible in these situations. WIE will help and support you and make sure that all appropriate procedures are followed.

In case of an emergency

Act appropriately (e.g. remove the student from danger, apply first aid, and call an ambulance) then phone the school's 24-hour contact person:

Name: Sara Bennett

Number: 022 104 8705

WIE is responsible for contacting the international student's parents. You are not responsible for this, and in an emergency or accident contact with the international student's parents should be made by WIE only.

In case of an accident or illness

If an international student is injured or unwell and your level of concern is high take the student to the nearest accident and emergency department or if appropriate dial 111 and ask for an ambulance. If your level of concern is low or moderate take the student to your GP (see section on Insurance/Medical procedures).

If you are concerned for your student's well-being and unsure of what to do, call the students emergency contact for assistance as it is better to be cautious.