

Limestone District School Board

Homestay Handbook

For Host Families

The Basics of the Homestay Program:

What is Homestay?

Homestay offers international students an opportunity to live in a Canadian household. Living in homestay is a safe, economical, friendly and culturally realistic environment for students living away from their own families. Homestay is not like living in a hotel. It means sharing in regular life with regular Canadians.

Who are homestay families? Why do they host students?

Many different types of families host students. Typically the homestay guardian(s) work full-time outside the home and have decided to open their home to an international student because they have an interest in learning about different cultures and are willing to share their every day lives with a student from abroad. They are interested in helping an international student profit from the opportunity he/she has to study in Canada.

What are Canadians like?

Generally, Canadians are friendly, relaxed and informal people. They are open-minded and willing to speak about almost any topic. Do not hesitate to speak with your host family about questions you may have about anything. Above all else, Canadians respect truthfulness. It is always best to tell the truth rather than to lie to cover something up.

How will life be with a homestay family?

Homestay students are treated like a regular member of the Canadian family. Students will likely share in small jobs around the house called "chores". You may be asked to do chores like clearing or setting the table, emptying the dishwasher, tidying your room and common areas etc..

Where will the homestay be located?

The homestay families are located as conveniently as possible in relation to the school where you will be attending. The address may be within walking distance of the school or otherwise, bussing will be available.

When does the homestay program run?

Homestays are available from September until the end of June. Sometimes, high school students stay on for the Summer School in July. If you wish to do this, you should discuss this with your homestay as soon as possible to make sure that they do

not have alternate plans for the summer. It is recommended that students arrive by the end of August to be well rested and ready for the start of the school year in September.

What should all homestay students keep in mind?

As visitors to Canada, homestay students should remember that they are representing their homeland and should behave well at all times. International students are in Canada to learn English and study. The homestay family is available to help you achieve these goals. The homestay family is here to help you enjoy this challenging experience to its fullest. International students are responsible to live by the homestay and school rules. These rules are designed to help you profit from the experience of living in another culture.

What should all homestay guardians and students keep in mind?

The experience of coming to live in another culture affects each person differently. There are, however, often distinct phases that students go through as they get used to living in Canada. These phases vary in length and can repeat themselves depending on the circumstances of the student's life here in Canada.

Phase One: Arrival

You will notice a lot of differences: new language, new food, new smells and sounds. Generally this period is exciting. You may notice some small health issues like diarrhea or constipation. You should take care of yourself (enough sleep, proper eating habits). You may feel a bit homesick. Make sure to connect with friends here in Canada and to participate in new activities both at home and outside of the home. Also try to make new Canadian friends while you are here, it is important to have friends outside your own culture to broaden your experience while in Canada. Try to avoid constantly being on the internet or telephone with friends and family at home so that you start to feel connected here. Write down your thoughts about the experience of living in Canada. You will find these writings very interesting to read later on in your life.

Phase Two: Culture shock

You may feel confused, anxious, irritable. You may notice a need for more sleep (try to avoid late afternoon napping as it leads to difficulties sleeping at night). You may notice that English becomes more difficult rather than easier. The most important thing to remember is that this phase is NORMAL. Here are some ideas to keep in mind. Talk about your feelings to your friends, guidance counselor, homestay guardians. Remember that you are not giving up your own culture you are gaining experience in another one. Take care of yourself, exercise, eat well, listen to music, do activities you like to do. IF YOU ARE REALLY UNHAPPY, MAKE SURE THAT YOU SPEAK WITH YOUR HOMESTAY COORDINATOR, GUARDIAN OR GUIDANCE COUNSELOR.

Phase Three: Adjustment

You will feel comfortable and "at home". School and home life will feel more normal.

Phase Four: Holidays

Sometimes, around major holidays, in your homeland or in the host country, you will feel lonely. These periods may remind you that you are far away from home. It is really important to try to fit into the holiday plans in the host country (for example Christmas) and to celebrate even far from home important holidays in your homeland. Canadians are very interested in learning about traditions from other parts of the world and would love to help you celebrate with special food or activities that you can teach them about.

Phase Five: Pre-departure

You may feel both sad and happy at the same time. Take the time to say good bye or thank you to those with whom you have developed relationships.

Phase Six: Return to homeland

You may feel that it is hard to fit into your homeland. Remember that you have grown and changed with the experience of living away from home. Try to remember that those at home may not be able to understand everything you have done or seen. Keep in touch with friends who have experienced the same things as you have. Remember that it takes some time to readjust to life at home.

Rights of Homestay Students

Food:

Your homestay family will provide you with three meals per day which will include a box lunch on school days. Host families tend to eat an evening meal together at around 6pm. This is a great time to work on your English, learn more about Canada and share information about your life in your home country.

You should be prepared to try new foods and be open-minded about new food experiences. You will likely find that your family will be interested in trying foods from your culture too. You can make suggestions to try things when you can or wish.

Bedroom:

You will be provided with your own bedroom that will be furnished and includes all linens. You will be expected to keep your room neat and clean. You may be requested to vacuum it as part of your chores.

Bathroom:

You should expect to have to share the bathroom facilities with other family members. You must keep your belongings organized in this room and keep it clean. You may have to take a shower or bath at specific times in the day so that all family members can use the facility. Showers of about 10 minutes in length are the norm. Use the shower curtain to protect the floor from water. Use a minimum of toilet paper and DO NOT flush any other items down the toilet.

Computer/Internet usage:

Usage of the family computer/internet is limited. Many students provide their own computer to do homework. Internet is not to be abused. Excessive use of computers/internet is strictly forbidden. Visiting inappropriate (pornographic, violent, racist etc) .internet sites or chat rooms is strictly forbidden. Homestay guardian(s) may, if necessary, impose restrictions on the use of computers and the internet if necessary. Computer usage MUST NOT affect sleep patterns or progress at school. Fees for internet service ARE NOT included in the homestay fees.

Other rooms in the house:

Homestay students are encouraged to “feel at home” in the homestay house. Students may watch TV or a movie with members of the homestay family and are encouraged to spend time in the family areas of the house. Students however, ARE NOT permitted in private parts of the home like bedrooms.

Guests:

Homestay students may invite **with permission from a homestay guardian** a friend to visit. Generally these guests are not permitted to stay overnight in a homestay home unless there is a special circumstance.

Telephone:

As with any member of a family, homestay students are permitted to use the telephone at REASONABLE hours of the day for short conversations. Each family will have its own rules about telephone usage. For long distance telephoning, phone cards can be purchased at a reasonable cost.

Laundry:

Each family will have its own arrangements for laundry. Generally the homestay students will participate in the chore by following the rules of the household which may include actually being responsible for washing clothes. If you are not sure about how to use the machines or how to do laundry, your homestay guardian will be pleased to help you.

Medical Issues:

Your tuition fee includes comprehensive emergency medical insurance. If you do become ill, your homestay guardian will help you get care. Keep your insurance card with you at all time. Take a claim form to the hospital or medical clinic if you need to visit the doctor. You should be healthy when you come to Canada. Your medical insurance DOES NOT cover care for on-going or chronic medical issues. If you take medication regularly, bring enough of this medication and an explanatory note (in English) from your doctor.

Transportation:

If permitted, school buses are available for getting to and from school. For high school students, there are city buses. In the winter months, city bus passes are available at 50% of the regular cost. See your guidance counselor for details about this.

Arrival/Departure:

You will be met and dropped off at the bus, train or airport terminal in Kingston. If you require transportation from another city, this can be arranged at additional cost to you.

Problems in homestay:

In the very unlikely event that you are unhappy in your homestay environment, you can discuss this with your homestay guardian(s), the homestay coordinator, your agent, or your school guidance counselor (secondary). Remember that it takes time to develop a relationship with your homestay family and that each person, including yourself, must make an effort for this.

Responsibilities of Homestay Students:

English

The homestay environment is ideal for learning English. You will be expected to interact with your family in English and practice English to the best of your ability every day.

School Life:

As with any student, you are encouraged to become involved in the life of your school. When possible, your homestay guardian is there to help you with this. If you are having difficulty with school work, see your teacher or guidance counselor or speak with your homestay guardian.

School Attendance

Students must attend school regularly. You must have your homestay guardian contact the school if you are going to be absent for any reason.

Ask Permission

Canadian families expect any family member, including international students, to ask permission when planning an activity or outing. **YOU MUST LET YOUR HOMESTAY GUARDIAN(S) KNOW WHERE YOU ARE AT ALL TIMES.**

Politeness

Canadians are polite people who expect courtesy at all times. This means that it is always important to use polite language (please, thank you, excuse me, pardon me, etc) and to be respectful of people.

Personal property/bedroom

You are expected to keep your personal property tidy and out of the way. Your bedroom must be kept clean and free of garbage.

Hygiene

You are expected to maintain a reasonable level of personal cleanliness. Follow homestay rules about bathroom usage and laundry.

Winter

You must be prepared for cold winters. You are expected to dress appropriately, eat well and get enough sleep. Your first responsibility is to be healthy ready to study. You must sleep regularly and eat well. Your homestay family will encourage you to follow regular routines.

Smoking/Alcohol/Drug Use

Smoking is discouraged. The legal age to purchase tobacco products is 19. You must obey all rules concerning smoking at home, school and in public. The legal age for drinking alcohol is 19. Drinking underage, excessively, using illicit drugs, using false identification to purchase alcohol/cigarettes is strictly forbidden and may result in expulsion from the program.

Travel

Travel plans should never interfere with academic studies and should only occur during designated holiday periods or weekends. Students should let homestay families and their guidance counselor/homestay coordinator know about any travel plans. The program does not take responsibility for students during these travel periods.

Traveling with the homestay family is encouraged. If this travel is outside Ontario, homeland parental permission is required. Students under 18 must not travel alone. Adequate supervision must be provided at all times.

Homestay Payment:

You must pay your homestay fee on the first of each month. In the event that you will be leaving the homestay environment, you are required to give one month's notice. The homestay family is also required to give this same notice. (**The first thirty days of any student staying in a new home is considered an adjustment period for both parties and the notice is waived)