



INTO UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

HOMESTAY: INFORMATION & GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

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The Homestay Experience

As an international student who has chosen to study in London you will be presented with different accommodation options. Options available to you will include Homestay, Halls of Residence, Hostels, Student House Shares, Hotels and many more.

We understand that for many of you it will be your first time visiting London and, for some, it might even be your first time travelling abroad without your parents. We recognise therefore that your choice of accommodation will be as important as where you choose to study.

If you have made the choice to live with a Host Family, you want to be integrated into a **“home away from home”** environment where you can live within a typically British family home, experience our culture and have further opportunities to practise your English outside of the classroom.

In choosing to live with a Host Family you may not have some of the independence that you would have if, for example, you chose to live in a Halls of Residence or Student House Share. You will be living within a family home environment and your actions and behaviour will affect your Host Family. If you are comfortable with this, Homestay will be a hugely rewarding experience, as well as the start of lifelong friendships for both the student and the Host Family.

Students who have visited the UK before often recount how their first experiences of London have shaped their opinions of our culture, of British people and how they view the UK. Where a student has had a positive first experience of the UK they will retain it for the rest their lives. We recognise this and take considerable care when matching your requirements to our Host Families to ensure that you leave London and your Homestay with truly memorable experiences.

London's Host Families

A Host Family does not always consist of two parents with children. We have many great Host Families who are single parents with children, young couples without children, co-habiting adults and retired people whose children have left home.

It is also important to note that London is a very multicultural city and our Host Families reflect this with people coming from a diverse range of ethnic groups. All of our Host Families were either born in the UK or have lived here for many years, so they all speak English to a native level.

All Host Families are visited before we use them to ensure that they will offer you a warm, welcoming and supportive environment.

Most Host Families are located in Zones 1 to 4 of London, either a walk or short bus ride to a tube or rail station, with excellent connections into central London. Journey times to the INTO Centre are on average 30 - 40 minutes although this can be longer at very busy times of the year as outer lying areas of London may also be offered to students who request homestay.

Since London has one of the best transport systems in the world, it is not necessary to be living in central London to be able to enjoy the very best that London has to offer. Many of our best Host Families are situated across North, South, East and West London within Zones 2 – 4.

Arrival with your Host Family

It is essential that you contact your Host Family to inform them of your arrival time before your arrival date. If you fail to do this, we cannot guarantee that your Host Family will be home at the time of your arrival to meet and greet you. In some cases, you may even have to wait outside until they arrive home.

If you have informed your Host Family about your arrival time and on the arrival day there are delays or disruptions that might cause you to arrive at your Homestay later than planned, please inform your Host Family as a matter of urgency. The Host Family may have arranged other plans on that day which might be affected by your late arrival, so it is important that you inform them of any delays.

The Host Family is NOT expected to collect students from the airport or at a pick up point.

Your first day in the home may include a welcome orientation to include introductions to family members. You will also be given initial information on local amenities and transport. You can ask your Host Family to help you plan your journey to your place of study. You may, for example, prefer to travel by bus rather than the London Underground and your Host Family is best placed to advise you about that. Feel free to ask your Host Family to help you buy and use a travel card (or 'Oyster' card). Although initially our transport system can be quite daunting, after a short time of using it you will find your way around and become independent.

We strongly advise you to exchange contact phone numbers with your Host Family when you arrive. Many students find it useful to buy a Pay As You Go mobile phone in their first week in London. Please give this UK number to your Host Family as soon as are in possession of one so that you are contactable for the duration of their stay.

Homestay Accommodation Options

We offer international students the options below:

Standard Accommodation: Standard Host Families are located predominately in zones 2, 3 and 4. You will live alongside your host family in a house or an apartment within a good residential area.

Superior Accommodation: Superior Host Families are located predominantly within zones 2 and 3 and will provide you with a higher standard of accommodation. Some residence may provide you with your own bathroom however this is rare and so cannot be guaranteed. You will be living alongside your host family within the family house or apartment.

Executive Accommodation: Executive Host Families are located within zones 1 and 2 and offer a very high standard of accommodation. You will live alongside your host family in either a house or an apartment. Some residences may provide a private bathroom however this is rare and so cannot be guaranteed.

The United Kingdom enjoys a rich, multicultural society particularly in London and our Host Families will reflect this.

At very busy times of the year outer lying areas of London may also be offered to students who request homestay.

Homestay Meal Plan Options

We offer international students the options below. All categories of Homestay accommodation offer the same meal options to any visitors:

Meal Options

Self-Catering:

- Students have full access to the kitchen, prepare their own meals and have dedicated storage areas for food in the kitchen. Times for use of the kitchen to be decided with Host Family.

If you choose Self-Catering, the times for use of the kitchen need to be decided with the Host Family. Please ensure that you respect the Host Family's house rules with regards to this and that you are using the kitchen when it is also convenient for the Host Family. You will be allowed full use of all the kitchen utilities, however please note that some Host Families may have separate dishes, pots and pans and cutlery for students to use.

Bed and Breakfast:

- Continental Breakfast: Cereal, Toast, Jam, Tea/Coffee, Juice
- 'Light' access to the kitchen only (for example, use of the microwave but not use of the oven/cooker)

Please note that, due to the restrictions place on the use of the family kitchen, the Bed and Breakfast option is only suitable for students making short homestay bookings. This option is most suitable for students who think that they will be eating most of their meals outside of the home.

If you are on a Bed and Breakfast meal plan, the Host Family will provide you with a continental breakfast (Cereal, Toast, Jam, Tea/Coffee, and Juice) which you can help yourself to in the mornings. The Host Family is not expected to serve you. Host Families are also not expected to provide a cooked "English" or "fried" breakfast. You will also have "light" access to the kitchen, which means that you can use the microwave, toaster and kettle, but not the oven or the cooker. You may also be given some storage space in the kitchen, but this is not usually a requirement.

Half Board (7 night meal plans only):

Continental Breakfast and Evening Meal Monday to Sunday:

- Continental Breakfast: Cereal, Toast, Jam, Tea/Coffee, Juice
- Evening Meal: Main meal to be cooked, nutritious, and to include a meat or fish dish and a light desert (fruit or yogurt). To be eaten with Host Family.

Please tell your Host Family at the beginning of your stay of any particular dietary requirements whether to do with allergies, religion or for any other reason.

If you are on Half Board you will be expected to be punctual at mealtimes. **You need to ensure that you let the Host Family know as soon as possible if you are going to be late or miss a meal.** If you are late the Host Family may leave your meal for you in the fridge or oven for you to reheat later. Your Host Family will try and be flexible with meal times, however please remember that you are living in a family home and not a hotel. There will be clear rules that are set out not just for you but for the entire family so that everyone can live together in harmony. Your Host Family will treat you as one of the family so you can expect the rules to apply equally to their own children.

Please also remember that if you are on Half Board, you will not be allowed access to the kitchen to make meals although you will be allowed to have access to make yourself a drink or a light snack. Host Families will always want you to feel relaxed in their homes.

Whatever Meal Plan you chose you must clean the kitchen after use and make sure all dishes are washed and put away. The Host Family will also have their own house rules to do with whether you can eat in your bedroom. Please clarify this with them. It is not uncommon for Host Families to ask students not to eat in their bedroom.

Cultural Differences & Homesickness

Your Host Family are aware that this may be your first time in London and that you may have very different expectations of life here. Cultural differences may lead to misunderstandings for both the Host Family and the student.

People may naturally feel offended where things are said in the wrong way. We also express ourselves through body language and tone of voice which can also vary from culture to culture. However, please remember that you are expected to be courteous at all times and it is customary, here in the UK, to say “please” and “thank you.”

Host Families have learnt to be sensitive to different cultural backgrounds and understand that adapting to life in London for the first time can be very challenging for an international student but it is also in your interest to try and engage with the Host Family and integrate as far as possible for the duration of your stay in order to get the best out of your experience.

Whilst the vast majority of students adapt very well to life in the UK, some can experience feelings of alienation and homesickness when they first arrive. This can be caused by things such as differences in routine and travel arrangements; unfamiliar official procedures; and differences in family life.

Please do not be afraid to talk to your Host Family if you are feeling homesick as you will find that discussing this with someone will often help and don't forget that for the duration of your stay in London, they are your family and there to help you.

Ground Rules

Host Families will provide Ground Rules to each student staying with them from the outset to avoid misunderstandings and to ensure that students are clear on the house rules. Areas that might be included in the ground rules are:

- 1) Policy on use of telephone for incoming and outgoing calls
- 2) Policy for internet usage
- 3) Times for using the bath/shower
- 4) Keeping the bathroom tidy and clear of toiletries
- 5) Where, if at all, smoking is permitted
- 6) Whether visitors are welcome and until what time
- 7) Times for breakfast and, if applicable, evening meals
- 8) What to do when a student expects to be home late
- 9) Rules on overnight guests
- 10) Number of wash loads allowed per week
- 11) Noise levels at particular times of the day
- 12) Clear guidelines on where food will be stored
- 13) Whether food is allowed in the student's room
- 14) Reminder to return house keys before departure

Please be conscious that in choosing to live with a Host Family you may not have some of the independence that you would have if for example you chose to live in a Halls of Residence or Student House Share. You will be living within a family home environment and your actions and behaviour will directly affect your Host Family.

Please remember that these rules are designed to help you integrate into the family home and that they will be rules that are for the whole household.

Keys

The Host Family will provide a set of keys to each student aged over 18 to allow access to the home as and when needed. Students between the ages of 16 and 18 may not be expected to have a front door key and Host Families can use their discretion here. If you are under 16 years old you will not be given your own front door key.

Your Host Family will trust you to take good care of the key and if you lose it, you will be expected to pay for a replacement.

Please remember to lock the front door when leaving the house at all times, making sure the house alarm is set if required.

Your Host Family should be present on the day of your departure to organise to collect the keys. If this is not possible, the Host Family will usually make arrangements to have keys returned prior to your departure. In their absence some Host Families may ask a neighbour or family friend to be there on your departure.

Please ensure that you do not leave without first returning the key to your Host Family.

Your Room

You will be accommodated in your own room unless you have specifically requested to share a room with someone else.

There will be a wardrobe and adequate storage space in each room. There should also either be a desk or table in your room for study with adequate lighting. If not, then the Host Family will make a desk available elsewhere in the house. This could be the dining room or kitchen table, as appropriate.

Please be aware that many family homes in the UK do not have locks on the bedroom doors. It is therefore likely that your room will **not** have a lock on your door. Of course, Host Families will always respect your privacy and only enter your room to do the weekly clean.

Your Host Family will clean your room weekly, including changing the bed linen, but it is up to you to keep it tidy. The Host Family may not be able to clean untidy rooms.

If you wish to watch TV or listen to music you are expected to do so quietly and respect the wishes of others especially late at night when people might be asleep. It is not uncommon, especially for families with children, that they ask you to keep noise to a minimum after 10 o'clock at night.

- The Host Family is not responsible for your belongings and nor are we.

You alone are responsible for your personal possessions and are advised to take out a student insurance policy to cover you in case your belongings are lost, stolen or damaged in or out of the home.

Communal Areas

The main living area of the house will be accessible to you, such as the dining room and the lounge. Many Host Families will be happy for you to join them after dinner to socialise. This will be a very good way to practise your English and learn more about the British culture. Likewise, many Host Families will be very interested to learn more about you and your home.

Please respect these common areas and ensure that if you are using them, you stay within the household ground rules.

Use of Bathroom

Although you will be able to have a shower every day, in most cases you will have access to a shared bathroom, and it is important to remember that you will not be the only one using it. For this reason, you should not spend too long in the bathroom especially in the morning which is usually a busy time for the whole family. As a guide, 15 minutes is usually considered a reasonable amount of time to spend in the shower.

Whether you have a shared bathroom or in some cases a private one, you should leave the condition of the bathroom as you found it. For example, do not leave wet and dirty towels lying around or personal washing on the wash basin. Although it is the responsibility of the Host Family to clean the shared bathroom, please help by not leaving your belongings there or any mess.

In the UK it is normal practice to have the hot water on a timer at certain times of the day and therefore it may not be available 24 hours a day. Some Host Families might present you with a bathroom schedule upon arrival, especially if there are several people using it during busier times.

Laundry

Host Families may offer to do your laundry once a week and free of charge. Alternatively, they will allow you to use their washing machine. If you need assistance in using the washing machine, please do ask your Host Family as they will be more than happy to assist you. You should ask your Host Family's permission if you require more regular washing but this may be available at a small charge.

Host Families will usually provide you with a place to dry your clothes; do not expect that you will be able to use your room to dry clothes.

Your Host Family is not expected to iron your clothes, but you may be able to borrow an iron when required.

Use of Telephone and Internet

Internet access will be provided. The use of the telephone is exclusively at the discretion of the Host Family. Many Host Families allow students to receive incoming calls only.

If you need to make outgoing phone calls, you might consider buying an international calling card. Calling cards are available at most local shops and you can buy one that has a certain credit limit (e.g. £5, £10 etc.).

When you want to call home, you will need to dial a pre-fix number before dialling your number. Please check the terms and conditions of any such card (and speak to the Host Family) before using it on the Host Family's phone.

Please always get the permission of your Host Family before using the phone and make sure that they are present in the house when you are doing so. You will be expected to reimburse your Host Family for any costs relating to any unauthorised use.

Many international students will have a Skype telephone account which will allow them to make free international phone calls via their laptops when connected to the internet. Where a Host Family has wireless internet access in the home, they will be able to give you a Pass Code to their internet account so that you can connect wirelessly to the internet from anywhere in the home.

Please be fair with the amount of time you spend online. In the UK home internet accounts come with different monthly download limits. Even internet accounts that offer unlimited download can still be subject to a Fair Use policy. Please only use the internet for light use e.g. browsing and studying. If you want to download data, please ask the permission of your Host Family before doing so. Host Families may include guidelines on the use of internet in the Ground Rules.

Heating & Lighting

Families in the UK do not generally keep the heating on all day and night and so, as with the hot water, the heating is usually controlled with a timer to switch on at certain times of the day. Heating is rarely turned on all night.

Host Families will always want you to feel comfortable in their home and will do their very best to ensure that there is adequate heating in your room, however, if you find that you are still cold especially at night, please ask for additional blankets and bed covers as many Host Families will be more than happy to supply them.

Host Families will also ensure that your room has adequate lighting but should you require additional light such as a lamp, most Host Families will be happy to provide this. Please remember to switch off all lights when not required as electricity is very expensive in the UK and leaving lights on is very wasteful. Many British families are very conscious of the environment so do not be surprised if they insist on this point during your stay.

Students and Guests

Students will only be allowed to bring guests (friends or family) to the homestay with advance permission from the Host Family. In practice many Host Families will be happy for a guest to visit during reasonable hours of the day (i.e. not after 10 o'clock) but they are not obliged to do so.

Similarly, whether to allow a student to have an overnight guest is at the sole discretion of the Host Family. However, please be aware that most Host Families will **not** feel comfortable with overnight guests.

Your Host Family will want to help you feel at home, but please remember that you are staying in a family home, not a hotel, so please respect the Host Family's rules and if you have friends visiting you will need to be reasonably quiet especially in the evenings.

Absence

If you are going to be away overnight or if you intend to come home later than usual, you **must** inform your Host Family in good time. Your Host Family will likely be very concerned about your safety, as your own parents would be, so please be thoughtful and either call or text them.

If you are unexpectedly absent, your Host Family will either contact us.

Host Families have a duty to report to us if students are not attending school or college classes since we have to meet very strict attendance targets as part of obligations to regulatory bodies including the UKVI (the visa and border Authority).

Bank Accounts

Whilst you are in London, you may want to open a bank account using your Host Family's home address.

You **MUST** ask permission before you do this and it is at the discretion of the Host Family to allow you to do so. Please bear in mind that the Host Family has the right to say no if they are uncomfortable with this. For many students on short term stays of up to 3 months, it will usually not be feasible for a Host Family to agree to you using their address, however, they might be more agreeable for stays of 3 months or more.

Host Families sometimes host many short term international students over the course of one year. If all of these short term students registered bank accounts at their address, then this could have adverse consequences on the Host Family.

If they are happy for you to open an account registered at their address, then please ensure that **you close it before you leave your homestay**. Many Host Families will ask you to confirm this to them by way of a letter from the bank.

Homestay Extensions

Host Families and students should not enter into a private financial arrangement on any Homestay extension. This will constitute a breach of the accommodation contract.

Families are aware of this policy and will therefore contact us if you do ask them directly to extend your stay.

Should you wish to extend your stay, we must be given 3 weeks' notice. Extensions are subject to availability. If an extension with the same Homestay is not possible, we will endeavour to find a similar alternative.

Student Welfare

Your Host Family will notify us of any concerns relating to your welfare during their time in the Homestay. Examples include non-attendance at class, illness/health issues and general homesickness. We will endeavour to resolve any such issues promptly and with sensitivity.

We reserve the right to monitor student satisfaction by means of survey or any other medium thought necessary to ensure the continued provision of a quality Homestay experience.

Whatever your age, it is imperative that the Host Family is present in the home for the duration of your placement. If your Host Family goes away from your Homestay for more than 24 hours please inform us immediately. We will investigate and depending on the circumstances, we may have to relocate you.

Hints & Tips to Enjoy your Homestay Experience

Always be friendly and courteous to your Host Family; remember saying 'please' and 'thank you' is very common practice here in the UK.

Try to interact and socialise with your Host Family at every possible opportunity as it is only by communicating with your Host Family on a regular basis that you will quickly improve your English language skills and learn more about the British culture.

Respect the Host Family rules. Remember that you are living in a family home and not a hotel and rules are designed not just for you but the whole household in order to ensure that everyone can live together in harmony.

Please treat your Host Family with the same respect that you would treat your own family. They are there to help you settle into London life quickly and easily. They will want to integrate you into their family home and way of life, providing you with a platform to make the most of your London Homestay experience.

Complaints

In the first instance, any complaint by a student should be made in writing to the London Accommodation Officer as follows:

The Accommodation Officer
INTO University Partnerships, London
102 Middlesex Street
London
E1 7EZ
Tel: +44 [0]207 059 4401
Email: London.Accommodation@into.uk.com

Alternatively, students can get help from a member of INTO staff at the Centre's Welcome Desk.

We aim to resolve all issues promptly and to the satisfaction of all concerned. We also undertake to act impartially to mediate between the student, Host Family and any other party involved.

The London Team

INTO accommodation staff are experienced at meeting the needs of our students and are always at hand to answer any questions or queries that you may have either before, during or after any placement.

Our office opening times are every Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) between 8am and 9pm and you can reach us on 00 44 (0) 20 7059 4401

Alternatively, please email us for information using the following address:
London.Accommodation@into.uk.com

We hope that you enjoy your stay here in London and with your London Host Family.