



Wellington
College

WELLINGTON COLLEGE

NOTES FOR HOMESTAY PARENTS

NOTES FOR FAMILIES LIVING WITH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The purpose of Wellington College's homestay programme is to provide an opportunity for international students to be in a supportive New Zealand family environment, learn more about the New Zealand way of life and to improve their English Language through living in a New Zealand home.

A REWARDING EXPERIENCE

Hosting an international student can be a rewarding experience for you and your family. Usually your student will join in family activities and outings and develop a special relationship with you. You can gain enjoyment from learning about another culture.

We have accepted your family as one of our homestay hosts because we are confident that you will accept and care for your student as though they were a part of your family. You have also met the requirements and guidelines for the New Zealand Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.

Hosting international students requires a high degree of cultural understanding and appreciation. Every student will represent and display different and unique cultural and ethnic differences, all of which should be valued as reflective of our rich multi-cultural city and school.

Your student may not always understand our customs or culture so we hope you will be patient with them until they learn our ways. **He will need the love and care that you would like your own son or daughter to receive if they were in a similar situation in another country.**

Your student is far from home. They will be lonely at times and appreciate your warmth and sympathy. They are typical human beings with the usual issues all human beings have. Love, warmth and understanding will solve most problems. We have always found that the homestay experience has the greatest impact on students' appreciation of New

Zealand. If they have a good experience, that is the memory they take away with them.

As a homestay parent you are responsible for the behavior and supervision of your student while in your care. You are **not** the **legal** guardians. You are responsible for outlining required standards of behavior and of informing the homestay coordinator if and when support is needed.

WHEN YOUR STUDENT ARRIVES.....

Your student will usually be met at the airport by Kathi and taken to your home.

Let your student know the name you wish to be called. We recommend in most situations that a first name basis is best.

Some students may wish to present a gift at the beginning so it helps if a little "space" is created for that to happen, perhaps by serving a fruit juice or cup of tea.

At the outset take time together to chat about both your and their expectations. **Be clear about your rules that contribute to home harmony such as:**

- meal times
- what foods they can't or don't like to eat
- what time you like the house quiet at night (Bedtime)
- use of the bathroom... show them how to lock the door, flush the toilet, turn on the shower etc.
- use of the internet
- visitors and guests

It may be useful to have this information on a chart, remember to keep the language simple.

When International students arrive at Wellington College they have an extended orientation programme about life at school. It is a good idea in the first day or two to take the student on an orientation trip around your neighbourhood, pointing out shops, bus/train stops, post office etc.

Try to be realistic in your expectations, taking into consideration the student's age and maturity. Do not confront the student with all the rules immediately on arrival but rather ensure that there is a clear understanding of the relationship. Ask them if they have any questions.

STUDENT NEEDS:

WHAT DOES YOUR STUDENT NEED?

Students staying with you need to be provided with the following:

- their own door key (instructions for alarm)
- 3 meals/day weekends and public holidays
- own bedroom which is their private space (i.e. children are excluded)
- comfortable bed, warm blankets and weekly linen changes
- wardrobe, study table, chair, and study lamp (and a heater in winter)
- laundry done with the host laundry
- an early discussion about mutual expectations
- love, patience, acceptance and support

STUDENT CARE:

(WITHIN A BUSY LIFESTYLE)

Bringing up a Family is Already a Full-time Job - With your guidance and support your student will soon learn to "pull his weight" and help with dishes and other household chores.

Family Involvement - Your student has chosen to homestay so they can get to know and enjoy our famous "Kiwi hospitality". They will want to chat and practise their English Language. We are confident the student will be welcomed into your home and expect him to join in with an active NZ family lifestyle. This includes inviting the student with you on outings that you would normally take your family on.

Encourage them to watch TV with the family for at least sometime every day, this helps their listening skills.

NB. Students may be unused to paying for themselves. If you want them to pay for themselves on a family outing please let them know before they make the decision to go out with you.

Good Company - Students are placed in homestays so that they can learn English, enjoy a different

culture and spend time with a Kiwi family. They often do not understand if the hosts are frequently absent and sometimes may feel neglected. Some will need encouragement to come out from their room and spend time with you, invite them to join you if they are shy.

Going Out - If you are going out, ensure that your student does not feel abandoned. Be sure that there is a meal available and that the student knows how to help themselves (not a common skill in many countries!). Younger students should not be left at home alone without adult supervision. If you are planning to go away, please notify the Homestay Co ordinator in advance so other arrangements can be made if necessary.

Problems - Try to assist the student with simple personal problems to the best of your ability - homesickness, culture shock, illness, loneliness etc - and notify the school of more serious problems.

Sickness and Accidents - Notify the school in the case of any accident involving the student. The school must be advised immediately if the student becomes ill and is unable to attend class. Students need a note from the Homestay parents for their form tutor if they are absent from school. If they have been absent for 3 days or more due to illness they will need a Doctor's certificate. The student is expected to remain at home if absent from school due to sickness.

Health - Please advise your family doctor that you have an overseas student staying with you. If there are any illnesses please contact the Homestay Co ordinator. The student has medical insurance and is responsible for their own medical expenses

Culture Shock - Culture shock sometimes occurs when people move from a culture in which they understand and can interpret the values, patterns of behaviour, gestures and other social factors, into a culture in which they do not know and understand these things. Many countries such as Japan and Korea have a very defined set of rules for many situations and relationships. In NZ rules can vary from place to place and family to family so an explanation of what is expected is very helpful to them.

Everyone experiences culture shock to some degree when they live in another country. Some of the symptoms of culture shock are:

- Homesickness: unexplainable weeping
- Boredom or need for excessive amounts of sleep
- Hostility toward or withdrawal from host family
- Compulsive eating or drinking
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Inability to work or study effectively
- Getting sick too often (colds etc)

INTERACTION **(ENCOURAGING DISCUSSION)**

Help with English Language - Students benefit immensely from their hosts spending time each day communicating and encouraging them with their English, so please try to converse as much as possible. Speak slowly and clearly, being careful not to raise your voice when speaking. Students may often say they understand you to avoid embarrassment or because they desire to please.

It is wise to check that they have really understood if it is something important, it may be helpful to write down for the student what it is you are trying to convey to them.

If your student speaks very little English and you have something vital to communicate, it could be wise to arrange a translation through the school to ensure that the student understands. Another way is to work with your student's electronic translator or Google translator.

Problem - If your student behaves in a way you find unacceptable, it is best to sort this out straight away. Students from different cultures often cannot guess what is displeasing you. Speak to them in a gentle and friendly way, as your student will be very keen to try to do things correctly. Let the school know if you need support with changing a behaviour.

Saving face - Asian students are often concerned to preserve "face" - both theirs and yours. You may wish to point out that your regard for them has in no way diminished, even though they have done something that has displeased you. Explain that this has arisen because of different cultural backgrounds. They are also very reluctant to tell you when they are unhappy or uncomfortable about anything, for example wanting more to eat, or being cold, or not liking a particular food or style of cooking.

We suggest you encourage the student to speak to you immediately if they find anything unacceptable or confusing. This will help to avoid any problem or concern blowing up to something that may cause unhappiness.

Avoid implying that the New Zealand culture is better. We suggest you say "this is what we do in New Zealand". You will find most students keen to learn how we do it and are anxious to fit in.

Reluctance to converse - Sometimes students are reluctant to converse freely with their host out of respect for their position as an elder. If this happens we suggest you insist that it is not impolite to initiate conversation and that you want them to make the effort to communicate so they can improve their English. They are often afraid of making a mistake.

SOUND (PARENTAL) ADVICE!

Dressing for the Climate - Students coming to NZ in the cool seasons will find our houses rather cold. In many countries in Asia and Europe where the winters are cold, they heat their buildings and houses to what we might consider uncomfortable levels even though the cost of electricity is far higher than here. They then move around their houses only lightly dressed. We need to re-educate them about wrapping warmly. They will adjust eventually, but please be patient.

School Attendance - Students should be at school on time each day unless they are unwell. When a student is unwell, the school should be notified by phone early, by the host parent. If the student does not attend school (without good reason) they may be denied another visa or be sent home. If your student is late to period 1 you will get a text message or email asking for a reason for their absence.

Homework - Students usually have some homework to be completed each evening. The amount of study will vary. The effort they make will depend on their enthusiasm and dedication to study. If no specific work is set, then students are encouraged to get involved with the family and general house duties.

Money - Please ensure your student does not carry large amounts of cash with them. You may care to help them open a bank account and use a plastic money card if this has not already been arranged by the school.

Household Chores - It is customary in New Zealand to expect people staying in your home to help with such things as setting the table and drying the dishes. Your student may come from a culture with servants. Many students will never have done any household chores at all. Students often are willing to help with family chores e.g. dish washing if asked. As they are to be like members of your family, they should help. In the notes we send to them we encourage them to assist with chores as it will help them be accepted as part of the family. You may need to show them how it is done in your home.

Friends - Students may wish to bring friends into your home or stay the night. Make your rules for visitors clear and suggest a time when friends should go home. If you allow a student to have a friend to stay the night, then you could expect that your student would also stay at another house some other time (an opportunity for a rest!).

Laundry - Explain where you want it placed and how often it is done. Some students will request to do it themselves. If you want your student to do their own ironing, please show them how. Explain your family system of changing sheets, towels, etc. Until these instructions have been assimilated, you may need to show your student again how and when to change sheets, etc.

Showering and Bathroom - Students in their home country may be accustomed to long showers or sloshing large quantities of water around in the bathroom, or having a shower then soaking in a deep hot bath. You may wish to state that in New Zealand showers should be kept to 5-10 minutes and show students how you like the bathroom left when they have finished. Flannels are very important in many cultures for washing and also doing most of the drying before using a towel to finish off. Please ensure that students have one available to use.

Bedroom - Provide a separate room for each student (unless otherwise agreed), furnished with a desk, chair, lamp (and heater in winter). If the room available is different from the one seen by our Staff at their inspection, please notify the Homestay Co ordinator. Provide fresh towels and bed linen on a regular basis. Extra bed covers need to be readily available to ensure student comfort.

Tell the student how you want their room maintained, sheets changed, and any appliances left e.g. the heater or electric blanket. Tell students to sleep between the sheets. You may even need to demonstrate this! In many countries they sleep on top of the bed covers, with heaters running through the night.

Bed time - Many New Zealanders go to bed “early”. Set a reasonable time at which you expect radios and TV to be turned off and the house to be quiet. If your student wishes to listen to their music after the agreed time then they should use headphones. You may also need to set an hour after which telephone calls should not be made or received.

Heaters - Students will need a heater in their room but also need to be told to switch it off when they leave their room and when they go to bed. Please remind them regularly of this. A 1000 watt heater uses about 7 cents of electricity per hour!

Transport to School - Ensure the student guest is familiar with the route to and from school, travelling with the student on the first day if necessary. After learning the way the hosts can expect the student to travel to and from school independently unless special arrangements are agreed upon.

Students should let you know where they are - If your student plans to stay away overnight, you should insist on an address and contact telephone number.

Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs - Make clear statements about your policies.

Telephone Calls - Students, like young people everywhere, are used to chatting at length on the telephone. However, those “home” calls are very expensive. Do not let your student run up big telephone accounts.

Do not act as guarantor for a mobile telephone (or anything else for that matter!) and before your student leaves ensure that there are no outstanding accounts pending.

MEAL TIMES AND FOOD

Family Meals - Your student will join you and your family for meals. If you have to be away in the evening, please ensure that you explain this to your student. Also make provision to have a meal for your student ready before you go out. They may not be able to cope with preparation or may be reluctant to intrude.

FOOD – Most of our students struggle with the differences in food, style of cooking and amount offered. For Japanese, breakfast is an important meal, for Chinese it is lunch that is their most important meal. It takes time for them to get used to our way of doing meals. Generally students from all countries enjoy the same array of foods and snacks that youngsters do in NZ. Students from Asia appreciate frequent servings of rice and they find potatoes bland. Fish is always appreciated, Chicken and Beef are usually fine, lamb and mutton may be an acquired taste. They are also accustomed to a wider variety of vegetables than we use. **Dinner should include protein and at least three vegetables or salad. Sadly our most frequent complaint from students is, not enough food at meal times.**

When providing lunch make sure it is enough, include some protein if you are making sandwiches ie egg or chicken or ham. **Noodles alone are not sufficient**, ask the student what they would like to have for lunch and how much they need to feel satisfied.

***NB.** Be mindful of any specific dietary needs the student may have, although generally students will expect to eat NZ food.*

Kiwi Breakfast - The New Zealand custom of informal breakfast (i.e. on the run) is very unusual for most other nationalities. In many countries breakfast may be the most important family meal, as the father and many other adults are often required to work late. Students frequently mention this so **be sure to have enough food out and provide regular coaching for them so that they become confident enough to help themselves.**

Breakfast should include cereal, toast and spread and a hot drink. Fruit and yoghurt could also be made available. A cooked breakfast is optional.

Snacks - Host families usually need to encourage their student to feel free to get a snack at any time between meals. For many people it is very natural to snack frequently. We suggest you keep fresh fruit (apples and bananas) out in a bowl, biscuits in good supply, dried noodles and dried fruit (dates and sultanas) as possible snacks. It is a good idea to

designate a snack bin or cupboard so that students feel comfortable about helping themselves. Snacks can include instant noodles.

Students may want to cook themselves breakfast or lunch in the weekends.

Table manners - Don't be reluctant to help your student with etiquette. They will be concerned with causing offence and want to do the correct thing so will be grateful for some kindly advice.

The best and least offensive way to teach the student may be to use a child as an example and generalise the skills in the discussion. This may include many other skills! A small correction with your own child may be a suitable opportunity to discuss other related topics:

- Laying the table
- Appreciation to the chef
- Holding cutlery correctly
- Saying "Please" and "Thank you"
- Passing, not reaching
- Topics not discussed at the table
- No slurping or sniffing (or other noises e.g. burping)
- Asking to be excused

Asian cultural no-nos

(for your information only):

- Blowing nose at the table
- Licking fingers
- Feet on table
- Sitting on a dinner table

BABY-SITTING

Students are not expected to act as babysitters.

HOLIDAYS

Homestay Host Holidays - Hosts must notify the school in plenty of time if they are intending to be away. Never leave the student in the home if the family are going away unless special arrangements are made with the school.

Student Holidays and Homestay Payments – If a student would like to remain in the homestay the following year it is usual for students to pay \$50 per week to the homestay while they have returned home on summer vacation

Changing Homes – Sometimes for various reasons, it is necessary to change accommodation for the student. The school expects 2 weeks notice from the homestay parent or student except in exceptional circumstances where the student needs to be moved immediately.

Farewell - The farewell with your student may be a protracted parting as this is the tradition in many countries, particularly in Asia. Sometimes it may be very emotional. Before your student leaves please be sure to take a forwarding address so that things left behind are able to be sent on.

Complaints - If you have any concerns or problems we want to know about them. Speak with the Homestay Co ordinator who will do everything in their power to help resolve any difficulties and rectify their cause.

PROVIDING SPECIAL CARE FOR YOUNG STUDENTS

Return Times - Hosts must insist that young students (under 18) be back by 6 pm on weekdays and midnight on Friday and Saturday. The student is required to tell you where they are going and with whom they will be associating. If they are expected for a meal they should arrive on time. If away from a meal, students should notify you well in advance.

School Contacts In Case of Problems - If you need any advice at any time please telephone the college and speak with the Homestay Co-ordinator

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Homestay Coordinator:
Kathi Scott: 021 717 449

Wellington College: 802 2520

International Director:
Mike Ellett: 022 639 1046