

## From the Editor

Greetings! Fall is here and your new terms are now well under way. Hopefully, the September rush is beginning to subside and your programs are running smoothly! In this issue of The Homestay Times, we have included information about training for host parents, pre-departure preparations and much more.

After seeing the Spring edition, many readers requested more information on ICI Communications' other publication, The Essential Guide for Homestay Students in North America. Over 23,000 copies have been distributed by high schools, universities and language programs all over the world to students about to embark on their North American experience and to the host families about to receive them. The Essential Guide's website was also updated this past summer; check it out at [www.homestayguide.com](http://www.homestayguide.com).

As always you can get in touch with us with any ideas you would like to share. Contact us at 613-542-9876.

We're always looking for tips and opinions to include in the next edition. The newsletter is free of charge, so contact so contact us if someone you know would like to be added to the mailing list.

We hope you enjoy this second edition of The Homestay Times and we look forward to your feedback!

Danielle Aubin, Editor

## Host Parent Training

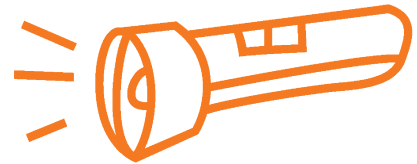
*You've chosen your homestay families, now help them succeed*

Great host families are invaluable to any international program. Courses and social activities are essential, but student satisfaction often depends on the success of the homestay experience.

As a result, orientation for hosts can be as important as it is for students. This can be as simple as a checklist and as complex as a workshop. Preventing common misunderstandings between parents and students or providing networking opportunities for host families can make all the difference in host-student relationships.

A host parent orientation program doesn't have to be expensive or time consuming. Providing a simple checklist to break the ice for the first meeting can help foster good communication from the start. It can also deal with a number of house rules, so that the student knows exactly what is acceptable. The checklist might include a house tour, telephone rules, the family's hours, curfew, where snacks are located and what kind of meals to expect.

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## Exercise Their English

Go beyond family dinners to find creative ways for families to practice English with students. Here are a few suggestions to pass on to your hosts:

- Get the student to call for pizza for a Friday night treat. They could also be responsible for ordering movie tickets or making reservations for a family outing.
- Why not a board game? A simple idea that's full of new vocabulary and fun for all. Monopoly or Clue are good ones to try.
- Song lyrics can sometimes be hard to sort out, even if English is your first

language. Sit down with your student and try to work through their favorite songs. This might be a good activity for students to try with teenaged family members, so they can get to know each other better.

- Get involved in something for the first time together. Volunteer work, fitness classes, art lessons - anything that is new for both the family member and the student so that you can make your mistakes together. Not only will it create a whole lot of conversation between student and family, it will also get your students involved in your community, using lots of new English skills! ☺

## Computer Tips for Homestay Students

Many hosts have computers at home and with that comes a whole new set of issues. What should a homestay student expect regarding the host family's computer?

- The easiest solution might be for students to stick to computer labs at school or set up internet access in their own rooms, since many bring laptops. While students should cover any monthly internet costs and user fees, host families should be encouraged to pick up the tab for wiring or installation, since that is a more permanent addition to the room that will be around for them to use long after the student has left.
- If the student is allowed to use the home computer, he or she should be respectful of the time spent on it and whether other family members will need it as well. Students should save work on diskettes to save hard drive space (and for privacy).
- Students should be especially careful using the internet. They should be made aware that they could be tying up the phone line and that some service providers charge by the minute. They should also avoid downloading to protect against viruses or making any changes to the computer's programs, unless host parents give clear permission.
- Both the host family and student should be sensitive about sending jokes and chain mail; not everyone shares the same sense of humor, especially when cultural differences are at work. An off-color email could sour an otherwise friendly relationship.

Hosts should have the right to forbid access to a home computer. Every family is different and so are preferences regarding computers. For some, downloading video games and music is perfectly acceptable; for others only more practical applications are allowed. Either way, students should be encouraged to discuss their needs and their host family's expectations right away to avoid conflict and misunderstanding.

*(Special thanks to Ann Blatt, Housing Coordinator at Edmonds Community College, Lynnwood, Washington, for her ideas for this article.)*

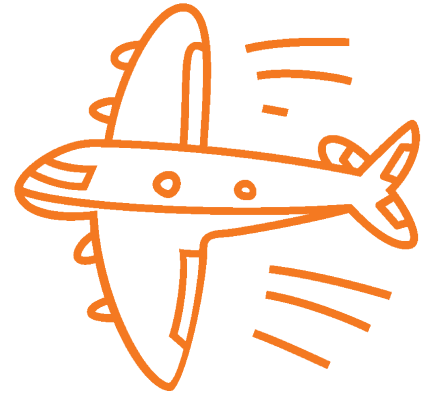
# Homeward Bound

*More than just packing a suitcase*

Every homestay experience has to end and returning home can bring very conflicting feelings. Students are excited to return home, but sad about leaving the friends they have made in their host country. On top of all that, students frequently struggle to readjust to their home society, a very real but often unexpected phenomenon known as reverse culture shock. Host parents and program coordinators can help ease this last transition. As always, preparation and communication are the keys to ending a homestay on a positive note.

First of all, there are the more practical items to consider after a long stay in a host country. Students should ensure that they have arranged for any transcripts or certificates they might need. They should be sure that they pay all fees, close bank accounts and collect any deposits owed to them. They should ship home goods that are too difficult to carry on the plane, return any library books and other things that have been borrowed and make sure that phone or internet services have been cancelled. Coordinators can help by supplying students with a pre-departure checklist.

Students should prepare for a swirl of emotions at the end of their homestay. Harvey Schachter, author of *The Essential Guide for Homestay Students*, recommends that students be encouraged to plan their good-byes, not just let them happen. Gift giving can



be one effective way of doing that. The best gifts are usually personal and reflect the student and his or her culture. Farewell parties or end-of-term banquets might be another way of bringing closure to the experience. Most importantly though, coordinators and hosts should make themselves available for open discussion about the students' feelings of loss, hope, excitement and sadness so that students can embrace those as a normal part of the experience.

Students also need to be prepared for emotions they will encounter at home. While most are ready to face cultural adjustments in their host country, many are unaware that they may go through reverse culture shock upon arrival at home. Many students experience confusion, depression and disappointment after the initial excitement of returning home; they may not be prepared for the changes that have or have not taken place at home.

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Some schools provide training to host parents during the initial home visit. This not only saves coordinators time but also gives new host parents clear expectations. Lisa Ouellette, Student Services Officer at St. Clair College in Windsor, Ontario, says this allows them to check out homes and deal with any concerns that hosts may have.

Other schools take more elaborate approaches to host training. One of the most frequently used methods is information meetings for parents, sometimes just for new host families, but often involving experienced hosts as well. Homestay Coordinator Lisa McIntosh at Kwantlen University College in Surrey, British Columbia, comments: "We put on a PowerPoint presentation with common questions and answers and give handouts. We also do some role playing with the parents. They act out things like what to do if the student is hiding in his or her room, or what do do if the student has bad hygiene habits. We look at the good and bad that come out of the scenarios and try to find the most politically correct way to deal with them." She has found that meetings are also important because they build better relationships: "It is



important to talk to everyone directly because they have to be comfortable to come to me when problems arise. The old host parents help the new at these meetings; it's a great networking opportunity for all of them."

Helen Jackman, Housing Coordinator at Spring International Language Center in Littleton, Colorado, holds information sessions, international dinners and festivals. "Host parents are busy people, so

*"The old host parents help the new at these meetings. It's a great networking opportunity for all of them."*

the meetings have to be dynamite or else it's hard to get people out. We find these sessions helpful and so do parents. It lets them arrange things like carpooling together." Spring's approach to host orientation is multi-faceted. "We are trying to get more done with mailings, and we



also do one-on-one interviews with our families. We have question and answer information we give out, a host family guide for new families and we send out newsletters before any big events." Their newsletters include information about upcoming activities, agendas for meetings and recipes that appeal to homestay students.

Many schools also use The Essential Guide for Homestay Students as a resource tool for their host families. While designed for student orientation, it can be a central part of a parent orientation as well. By covering issues like culture shock, household appliances and meal times, the guide shows parents what problems might arise and how to deal with them. "We have meetings with our parents and I go through The Essential Guide with them," says Bonnie Hanna, Program Advisor at Saskatchewan's Red Coat Trail School Division. "I highlight the parts I think are most important and add my comments as well. We're a small program, in a small community and the discussion helps." 🍷

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They may feel that they don't fit in with friends and family who don't seem to understand their experiences and new points of view. For example, students can be dissatisfied with everything at home and become critical or hostile toward parents and friends. Many women also find it hard to fit in with gender norms at home after the freedoms they experienced in North America.

Dr. Dennis White, clinical psychologist and author of several articles on the impact of intercultural experiences, writes that reverse culture shock usually involves a progression from initial euphoria of being home, to hostility towards any and all aspects of the home culture.

Gradually, however, students will adapt their new cultural knowledge with old and gain a new ability to see the world from new vantagepoints. White writes that "the best preparation for reverse culture shock is to explain it, so that people anticipate it and see it as a positive sign that their intercultural experience was successful."

So how can homestay programs help their students deal with reverse culture

shock? According to Ann M. Moore, author of *The Unofficial Guide to Study Abroad*, while away students should be encouraged to talk about their feelings and maintain contact with people and institutions at home so that returning isn't so shocking. She also recommends that returning students become actively involved in clubs and activities with an international focus and that they maintain ties to the host country and use them effectively, perhaps as contacts for job or travel opportunities.

Edmonds Community College in Lynnwood, Washington, takes several steps to ensure their students are ready for departure. "We have an exciting orientation program; in the third or fourth week of term we have a luncheon or a dance for students where we hand out information on culture shock and reverse culture shock", says Mari Acob-Nash, Associate Director of International Student Services. Presentations are given to English as a Second Language students in class, which include a pre-departure checklist and a culture shock review. At mid-term the school sets up booths in the

cafeteria about reverse culture shock for other international students in academic classes. "We deal with the practical first and then move on to the more emotional side," says Acob-Nash.

To Dr. White, culture shock and reverse culture shock are signs of a successful international experience: "Rather than trying to avoid these phenomena, the best preparation is to expect them both in going abroad and upon returning." 🎵

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## The Essential Guide For Homestay Students

An important part of any homestay program, *The Essential Guide for Homestay Students in North America* is a booklet that helps students become oriented to living with North American families. It covers everything from culture shock to rights and responsibilities to making meals. The booklet is available in seven languages – Arabic, Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese and Spanish.

Homestay programs across the United States and Canada have found that the book is an invaluable addition to their program.

For more information about *The Essential Guide for Homestay Students*, please contact Danielle Aubin at 1-800-615-8666.

**Visit Our Website!**  
[www.homestayguide.com](http://www.homestayguide.com)

## Home Sweet Home

Reverse culture shock is a widespread, but sometimes unknown reaction to returning home. Dr. Dennis White has written extensively on the subject of intercultural adaptation. Find his article "So You Think They're Home Now: Some Thoughts for Parents of Returning Exchange Students" at [www.studentexchanges.org/booksculturegrams/](http://www.studentexchanges.org/booksculturegrams/). Here are some of his examples of the types of feelings students might experience when they get home:

- My parents don't understand me. They expect me to be the same person I was when I left.
- I feel closer to my host family than I do to my own parents. I'm afraid my parents will be hurt if they find out.
- It's difficult to readjust to my old lifestyle.
- I made so many friends and now I'll never see them again.
- I didn't have an easy time in my host country. Now everyone is discussing what a wonderful experience I had. They don't know what it was really like.
- I don't find my old friends very interesting anymore. We don't have much in common.

Emphasizing that these ideas are normal, being tolerant and listening are the best ways to deal with reverse culture shock.