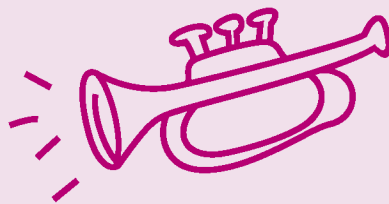


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The Essential Guide For Homestay Students

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 call: 613-542-9876.

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www.homestayguide.com

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Ontario, have come to learn that religion often plays a key role in the lives of visiting students. "On some of the homestay application forms students specifically ask to stay with a Christian family," she says.

Kliman agrees. "A lot of families from Mexico and South America feel it's important that their kids be placed with a Catholic family that goes to church," he says. Fortunately, they have enough churchgoing families to fill the need.

"Homestay coordinators should be aware of the religious needs of students."

Homestay coordinators can do their part to ensure good matches between hosts and students. On application forms, be sure to include questions about religious beliefs so that a student can be found an appropriate host family, if possible.



One Canadian family recently rediscovered their religious heritage when they hosted a student from Korea. The student had been raised a devout Christian, and his mother became distraught when she discovered that the host family were not regular churchgoers. She contacted the agent and asked if the family would be able to take her son to church every Sunday. The family obliged and now they all attend church together.

MacRae notes that students from Middle Eastern countries often have religious needs that homestay families may not have considered. "Sometimes Muslim students will request a separate prayer room," she says, adding that the families do what they can to accommodate them.

Many homestay families make special efforts to celebrate holidays with their students, whether it's the student's holiday or their own. Students often enjoy the opportunity to experience the rich traditions around Christmas. As one homestay student said: "One of the most interesting parts of my stay was the Christmas party. About 30 people from my host family came together and celebrated a traditional Christmas. I'll never forget it."

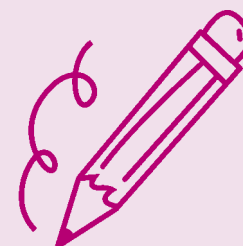
From the Editor

Welcome to Issue #4 of The Homestay Times. This time out, we're tackling some issues that are bound to surface as you help students and families create cross-cultural bonds that will last a lifetime: religion, gender and household chores. We've talked to a few homestay coordinators and gathered their thoughts and experiences. Hopefully, the advice they've passed along will give you some useful ideas and prove to be a valuable tool to make your job easier.

Speaking of valuable tools, one of the most valuable tools you'll find is The Essential Guide for Homestay Students. It's chock full of handy tips and useful information for students, host families and homestay coordinators alike. If you aren't already using it as a key part of your homestay program, you can order it by calling 613-542-9876. Or print out an order form at www.homestayguide.com.

As always, we value your input. If there are topics you'd like to see us cover, don't hesitate to contact us at 613-542-9876.

We hope you enjoy this issue of The Homestay Times and we look forward to hearing your impressions.



In Good Faith

Religion can be a sensitive issue for both hosts and students so coordinators should lay the groundwork for success



Both hosts and students often have deeply held religious beliefs. Putting those of different religions together in the same household can be an excellent opportunity for intercultural learning, but homestay coordinators need to set some guidelines.

Host parents often try to include their students in family activities by inviting them to religious services. However, coordinators should encourage families to handle this carefully so that students aren't left with the impression that their hosts are trying to convert them to their faith.

Harvey Schachter advises students in The Essential Guide for Homestay Students that "you do not have to attend religious services with your host. If invited, it's your choice whether to join in. If you decide to attend only once for the experience, it's best to state that at the outset so nobody's feelings are hurt when you choose not to return."

As well, homestay coordinators should be aware of the religious needs of students. If there is no one in the community who shares the student's religion, it can leave them feeling isolated. Mike Kliman of School District 38 in Richmond, British Columbia, acknowledges that schools in smaller centers run a bigger risk of facing this problem, as the communities tend not to be as diverse. "The best cities for homestay are the ones that offer options," he says.

Homestay coordinators can help by preparing a list of nearby worship centers and social groups for people of their student's religion. Whether they be on campus or off, they'll provide the student with a place to belong and a source of friendship.

Homestay coordinators, like Catherine MacRae of Fanshawe College in London,

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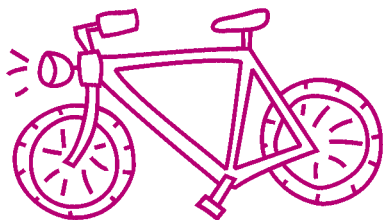
Bridging the Gender Gap

One of the biggest and most immediately noticeable differences facing homestay students can be gender roles. Here in North America, we tend to take equality between the sexes for granted, and it's easy to forget that in other countries women are still considered subservient to men.

Agents working to place students in homestay programs typically spend a lot of time preparing students for this particular facet of North American culture. But sometimes all the preparation in the world cannot change the fact that our progressive attitude toward women's rights often comes as a shock to students who haven't lived this way before.

It can be especially trying with male students, who are used to treating women, even their own mothers, like servants. "A male student from the Philippines has to learn that he can't treat his homestay mother like his own mother," says Mike Kliman of School District 38 in Richmond, British Columbia. But he adds that while these issues tend to cause problems at the outset, they usually sort themselves out over time. "The students generally realize that they're here to learn. It definitely can take a little perseverance, but by the end of the year, most of them come away with a healthy respect for women."

Still, some ingrained notions are hard to dispel. Catherine MacRae of Fanshawe



College in London, Ontario, says some of the more experienced homestay families she deals with specifically ask for students who will be more tolerant of our attitudes toward women. "Some families have requested that we do not send them a male from the Middle East," she says. "It's strictly because of the way they treat women."

Seeing men help out with the cooking and cleaning and women taking on power and responsibility in the home and at work can be very confusing for a young man from another culture. But it can also be very empowering for a young woman. "I think women really enjoy the freedom here," says Fran Golden, homestay coordinator at the University of Missouri. "I've often wondered about how they readjust when they come back home. It's definitely a step backward for them."

Ruth Young, Manager of International Student Housing at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, says female students often come away with a feeling of inspiration and endless possibility. "A lot of female students are impressed that women have power in the family," she says. "And they're even more impressed when they see women in managerial positions in the workplace. It helps them see opportunities that may not have been there before." This is particularly true at Laurentian, Young says, where most of the Student Housing staff, and other high ranking officials, including the university president, are women. "It's like a world of possibility opens up to them. They realize that they can do so much more than they ever imagined."

Breaking the Language Barrier

10 Tips from Those Who Have Done It

1. Speak slowly and clearly, especially during the first few months.
2. Avoid broken English – speak the way you normally speak.
3. Use gestures and demonstrations. While the words may differ, gestures can be universal.
4. Keep a dictionary nearby at all times.
5. Draw pictures.
6. Involve the entire family. Sometimes children and the elderly have ways of communicating that are actually better than your own.
7. Create lots of opportunities for the student to exercise their English, both at home and away. Watching television or going to movies together is a good place to start.
8. Ask lots of questions, using words the student knows.
9. Three words: Repetition, repetition, repetition. The more you use the words, the more chance they have to sink in.
10. Be patient. Even the biggest barrier can be overcome in time.

Household Chores

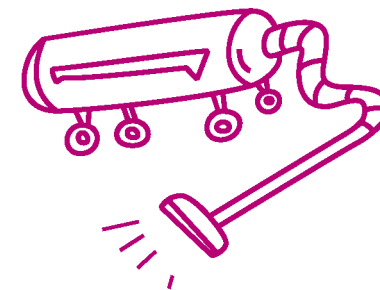
How much should students be expected to do around the house?

Sometimes the tiniest, most seemingly insignificant things can end up causing the most tension. We may not think of household chores as a big deal, but since these affect us almost every day, they can blow up into a major issue in just a few short weeks.

Perhaps the best way to avoid these problems is for homestay coordinators to help families establish some guidelines at the outset. Hosts should explain to the student that she's now a part of the family, and that all family members are required to pitch in when necessary.

Since every household is different, there are no pre-ordained rules about how to help or how much work needs to be done. The expectations also differ from school to school. At Fanshawe College in London, Ontario, for example, students aren't required to do much. "They pay a lot of money to the provider, and we feel they should not be required to assist," says Homestay Coordinator Catherine MacRae. "I'm sure that some do, but that would be up to the student." However, MacRae adds that they do suggest that students carry their own dishes to the sink and keep their rooms clean.

In The Essential Guide for Homestay Students, Harvey Schachter tells students: "The homestay mother is not your maid.



You should keep your room tidy. You should rarely take food into it and always clean up immediately."

Some schools encourage more participation in household chores, but ultimately the matter is between the family and the student. A homestay coordinator may have to step in if the student's workload around the house gets too heavy. Mike Kliman of School District 38 in Richmond, British Columbia, recalls a situation where the student was made to clean not only her room, but also the family bathroom, clear the table, wash all the dinner dishes and

Sometimes the tiniest, most seemingly insignificant things can end up causing the most tension.

do extra chores on the weekend. "At that point, we had to say something because the student isn't supposed to be a maid," he says.

Kliman has also experienced problems at the other end of the spectrum. At one home, the homestay mother told the student that his only job was to concentrate on his studies. She would take care of everything for him, including his laundry. "We had to step in then too," he says, "because the student actually wanted to do his own laundry. The homestay mother was just trying to be as helpful as possible, but she ended up infringing on his rights."

And then there are those who are simply not used to helping out around the house. In their own countries, some stu-



dents have servants who cook and clean and take out the trash and they may not even know how to do these simple chores. Ruth Young of Laurentian University says she frequently faces this problem. "They certainly need a lot more encouragement than a North American student," she says. "They tend to pick up on it, but it could take a little longer than you'd think."

Kliman remembers a girl from an affluent Mexican family who had always had servants in the house. When she arrived at her homestay family's home, she noticed that everyone in the family was pitching in and she decided to find a chore to make her own. "She took on the bathroom," Kliman laughs, "the hardest room in the house. But she really enjoyed it and it became her special thing." While everyone was happy, Kliman says it caused a few problems for the girl when she went home to Mexico. "Her family just couldn't understand her fascination with cleaning the bathroom. Not only that, but the maid was really put out."

Fran Golden of the University of Missouri says a student recently did a lot of work helping his homestay family clean out its basement. "He did it because the rest of the family was doing it and he just wanted to be a part of the family. He wanted to participate like everyone else."