

Host Family Obligations

As a host family, there are a few obligations we can expect from you. First and foremost you will be obliged to provide an evening meal with you the host family and the students eating the meal together. This is a really important part of the day as, with busy schedules, this is often one of the only time in the day the student will interact with the family and practise their English outside of the classroom in a relaxed environment. In our own experience of hosting students, we often find we are still sitting around the dinner table two hours after the meal and this is a really great way to make the students feel settled and welcome and to develop their language skills. Eating separate meals should be avoided, except in emergencies as it can be a very soul destroying experience eating by oneself in a strange house. Of course the students may sometimes go out for dinner, leaving you to have an evening to yourselves and occasionally the students may be willing to cook, enabling you to try some of the cuisine from their country. Breakfasts should also be provided, although you may well find that you get up and leave the house at different times, so it is unrealistic to expect to all eat breakfast together. You will just need to show the students where to find everything, or if you prefer, leave it out. Students will provide their own lunch on week days; on weekends there is no obligation to provide lunch, although if you are eating lunch at home and they are there, why not invite them to join you?

You should also provide the student with a front door key and allow them to use the communal areas of the house whenever they want during normal waking hours. In our experience students usually leave the house around 8 to 8:30 in the morning to attend classes starting at 9 and usually don't return until around 5 to 6 pm. In the event they are around in the day, you will need to ensure they are quiet if you work from home. Most students are respectful of this and if they are in, will often be studying in their room. You should also show the students where the washing facilities are, how to connect to the internet and allow them to use the bathroom during normal waking hours. It would also be well worth your while having some rules/guidelines to include on a notice board or on the door of their room, it will avoid any misunderstandings or confrontations, especially as they may not remember or understand everything you tell them on day one. We have a template you can adapt to your own home.

This is what you need to provide in order to ensure a comfortable living environment for the students throughout their stay. These are based on those set out by the British Council:

- A proper state of cleanliness and repair
- Adequate heating and lighting
- Curtains or blinds
- Suitable floor covering
- A sufficiently spacious bedroom (8.5 metres square or bigger) with natural light, equipped with an adequately sized bed and adequate hanging and drawer space for clothes
- Appropriate privacy from members of the opposite sex
- A table for private study (where appropriate) with an upright chair
- Sufficient washing facilities and access to a bathroom, with baths or showers available daily
- A change of towels and bed linen each week and an adequate supply of duvets or blankets
- A laundry service or clearly explained laundry arrangements.

The British Council and English UK also produce a Code of Practice for Host Families providing Homestay to international students:

- To encourage the student to speak English as much as possible in your home
- To encourage the student to feel at home and to treat him/her as a member of the family rather than a paying guest
- Not to host another student of the same native language at the same time unless by special arrangement with the students and the schools/centres
- To provide a clean and comfortable student room
- To provide a home environment in which it is possible for the student to carry on his/her English Studies properly
- To provide the student with a balanced and appropriate diet (if applicable)
- To show due concern for the welfare, safety and security of the student during his/her stay
- To give the student reasonable and regular access to bathroom and laundry facilities
- To maintain a close liaison with the Homestay accommodation agent and so be in a position to help resolve any problems that the student may encounter during his/her stay
- To respect the student's different cultural background and to be sensitive to the needs of the student

Furniture should be in good, safe condition and comply with current fire safety legislation, in particular the Furniture and Furnishings Regulations (1993) (furniture which complies carries a manufacturer's label which must be permanent and non-detachable. Bed bases and mattresses are not required to bear a permanent label but compliance will be indicated if the item has a label stating that it meets BS7177. This does not apply to bedclothes, curtains, carpets and furniture made before 1950). See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1988/1324/contents/made> for further details.

It is your responsibility to inform the Inland Revenue of income earned through letting rooms to students. You may claim tax relief on the costs of meals, wear and tear and other services provided.

It is your responsibility to inform the provider of your home and contents insurance to ensure that you have the appropriate level of cover in place.

Fire Safety - as a minimum, fire precautions should include a system to detect and warn residents of a fire (smoke/ heat detectors) and a safe, clear escape route from the building. You should ensure detectors are tested regularly and kept functional.

Landlords are legally required to have all gas appliances checked once a year for safety by a Gas Safe registered engineer. Tenants have the legal right to see proof that the check has been done.