

HOMESTAY GUIDELINES

We hope that you will find these information sheets useful. As customs in different countries vary, you may occasionally be surprised by the way things are done here in South Africa. For example, it is not usual for South Africans to take off their shoes when entering the home, so you are expected to keep your shoes on in the house. However, it is always wise to ask should you feel uncomfortable to keep your shoes on in the house.

- What you can expect of your hosts
- What your hosts will expect of you

General information

Your hosts will treat you as one of the family, but this means that you will need to fit in with their family routine, which may be difficult to what you are used to. If there is anything that you do not understand or are unhappy about, please do not be afraid to ask your host. Misunderstandings can sometimes occur because of language difficulties and it is best to sort out any concerns at the start!

Homestay families do not provide student guests with a service similar to a hotel. However, they guarantee you a high standard of accommodation with friendly hosts, all of whom we know personally. Your host is there to help you but not serve you. Politeness and friendliness are a normal part of English family life and it is customary to say “Good morning”, “Good evening” and “thank you” to your hosts when they have been helpful. They should do the same.

Arrivals and departures

Your friends and family need to be aware that you are staying with a host family and therefore, arrival and departure times need to be arranged prior to arrival. Please ensure you give as much notice as possible to your host, to enable them to arrange to be home to greet you upon arrival.

Unless special arrangement has been made and agreed with your host prior to arrival, the following check in and out times apply:

Weekend arrivals

Check in always after 11h00 and before 20h30

Check out is before 11h00

Week day arrivals

Please note that most hosts will be at work during the day time, so unless prior arrangement has been agreed, all week day arrivals must be after 18h00 and before 20h30.

Your room

Your room is your own private area for sleeping, relaxing and studying. Your host will clean your room before you arrive. It is your responsibility to keep the room clean and tidy during your stay. Bedrooms in family homes do not usually have their own key. Your privacy will be respected, but (if there is a bedroom key) please do not lock your door when you leave the home. Friends should not be brought to your room, either to visit or stay overnight, without your host's permission. You are not entitled to use the room to accommodate anyone other than yourself.

If you wish to play music, or if your room has a TV, please keep the volume low and respect your hosts' need for quiet, both at bed-time and possibly at other times during the day. If you wish to plug in your own appliances (such as a computer or radio), please check with your hosts first as electricity is expensive.

Your hosts will change your bed sheets, pillow-cases and towels once a week.

The rest of the house

You will be able to use the main living areas of the house such as the sitting and dining rooms. Most students watch TV or converse with the family in one of the communal rooms. Dinner will be taken in the dining room with the family.

Some hosts may have a private study room, which is not for the use of other family members and guests. Bedrooms are always private. Students/guests must never enter the bedrooms of their host family.

Your host is responsible for cleaning the communal areas of the house, but you should keep the home tidy by not leaving your belongings around the house.

In winter, homes are generally cold as inner walls are built using concrete and there is no central heating. If you are not warm enough, please speak to your host family about giving you extra blankets as they will not permit the use of electric or gas heaters in the room. And in the summer, homes are usually not air-conditioned, so you might have to contend with the heat and humidity by keeping a bedroom window slightly opened.

Bathrooms

Bathrooms may be different from what you are used to in your own country. For example, some may have a bath and not a shower, and some may not have a toilet. In South Africa it is common to have the toilet separate from the bathroom. It is also important not to spend a long time bathing or showering if others are waiting to use the bathroom. In addition, water is expensive, so please do not waste it.

Your host is responsible for cleaning the bathrooms and ensuring that they are always clean, but please leave the bathroom as you would wish to find it as there may be someone waiting to use it straight after you. Please take care not to leave a wet floor, your personal toothbrush and other items should be left tidy out of respect for others.

The host will provide toilet paper, but you should purchase your own “toiletries” such as toothpaste, body soap/shower gel, shampoo etc. Please do not help yourself to other peoples’ toiletries. Toilet paper should not be removed from the bathroom for cosmetic use. Chemist shops offer a wide variety of inexpensive bath products and cosmetics. Used toilet paper should be disposed of in the toilet (not in the rubbish bin) while feminine sanitary/hygienic products and cotton wool should be disposed of in the bathroom rubbish bin (not in the toilet).

Laundry

If your host has a washing machine, they will either allow you to use it once a week or do your laundry for you on a weekly basis, free of charge. It is a good idea to check laundry facilities with your host soon after arrival as some hosts do the weekly wash on a specific day each week. Hosts do not normally do ironing for you but can usually lend you an iron and ironing board.

You should offer to buy washing liquid and fabric softener if you are using the laundry facilities at the house. If you need to use the washing machine or have your washing done more than once a week, you should ask your host if this would be possible. Some may charge for additional loads of laundry.

If doing your own laundry, you should ask your host where you can hang your clothes to dry. Clothes should not be dried in bedrooms or bathrooms.

Meals

Meal times in South Africa vary from family to family. Generally speaking, families eat earlier than, for example, in continental Europe or South America. It is important that you check with the family as soon as you arrive, what time breakfast and dinner (supper) are served. If these times conflict with your study schedule, you should discuss this with your host. If you have booked Half Board accommodation and cannot be home on time on a certain day, you should telephone your host to advise them. They may be able to leave your dinner ready for you to reheat when you return.

Breakfast times are normally arranged according to the time that your host has to get to work. If breakfast time is too early or late for you, you may have to prepare your own breakfast. This should be discussed with your host who will explain where to find the breakfast food items. It is important to note that few families still provide or have a traditional cooked breakfast. Your accommodation includes Continental breakfast.

Dinners: If there is anything you particularly dislike or cannot eat, please discuss this with your host.

Continental Breakfast normally consists of fruit juice, cereal, toast or bread with butter and jam and a cup of tea/coffee. You may purchase extra breakfast items for yourself should you wish.

Please note, that you may not be entitled to use the kitchen except to make tea/coffee, unless you have previously arranged this with your host, or have requested self-catering accommodation.

Please do not take any food from your host's kitchen without first asking. Your host will provide you with the meals booked but this does not include snacks throughout the day.

You will be expected to wash all dishes, pots and pans and clean the kitchen thoroughly after use. This is sometimes the routine of all family members; remember that you to will be a family member while staying with your host.

Telephone

Your host's telephone is for you to receive calls from family and close friends only. To preserve your host's privacy, please do not give your host's telephone number to casual acquaintances made in South Africa. If you need to make and receive a large number of social calls, you are advised to purchase a "pay-as-you-go" air-time voucher which you can use with your own cell phone. A local SIM card can be purchased for less than \$1.00US when you arrive in South Africa.

You are not entitled to use your host's telephone to make outgoing calls or to connect to the internet without permission. However, some hosts will permit you to make outgoing calls using a phone (which can be purchased at many local retail outlets throughout South Africa).

Returning home late

If you are planning to return home late, please advise your host family in advance, so that they do not worry.

Valuables

Neither One World Language School (Pty) Limited, nor your host, are responsible for your personal possessions. You are advised to take out a student insurance policy to cover you in case of belongings are lost or stolen in or out of the home.

If you have brought valuable items such as jewelry, computers, cameras or cash with you, you are advised to ask your host where they can be stored for safekeeping. You are not advised to keep large amounts of cash in your room or on your person.

Conversation with the host

Hosts are aware that you would like to practise your English and are happy to help you with your English conversation and sometimes with homework. Please remember that hosts are not teachers and as some of them have busy schedules they may not always have free time most convenient to you. You are therefore advised to discuss schedules with your host in order to plan your time together.