

HOMESTAY – FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

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Introduction

Why this document?

Thank you for becoming part of our family of homestay hosts – whether you only recently joined us, or have been with us for a while, we thank you for sharing your home and culture with international students who may be in Australia for the very first time.

As you are no doubt aware, Australia has a unique culture that differs greatly from many overseas countries. Student are not only here to earn an education, but also to experience a new way of living. You are, in reality, sharing a bit of your daily life with them.

Whilst exchanging culture is a wonderful thing for both you and students, in very rare instances misunderstandings can happen, even with each party's best intentions. This FAQ sets out, in brief and simple terms, the minimum standards of being a homestay host.

This is part of your agreement with us – please take the time to read it!

Please note this document should be read in conjunction with, and does not replace, the *Homestay Services Agreement* which you must sign as part of the conditions of being our Homestay hosts; and is part of the 'Homestay Guidelines' referred to in the Homestay Services Agreement to which you must abide. It is impossible to list every scenario in Homestay, therefore this document should be seen as one that establishes the minimum standards and not an exhaustive list of rules.

We hope this FAQ helps you get the most of the sharing experience – with many cultures, to become one family.

Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQ)

Before your student arrives...

1. What do I need to provide as a Homestay host?

A: First and foremost, an open mind, a desire to share your life and culture with someone from another background, and willingness to accept students as part of your family!

In practice, the following are the minimum standards:

- Provide a suitable bed, with linen, blankets (appropriate for weather), pillow, and towels.
- A desk sufficiently sized for working, and a chair.
- Natural lighting – at least one window facing outside.
- Artificial lighting – including at least a desk lamp.
- Adequate heating and cooling (appropriate for weather).
- Wardrobe or similar facilities for student to place their clothing.

The overriding requirement is that the student is given a safe, clean, and reasonably comfortable private environment, free of any hazard (including electrical, structural, or natural.)

2. Do I need the 'Working With Children Check'?

A: Yes, it is a legal requirement. You and all residents in your home over the age of 18 must obtain this check. In NSW, you may use the 'volunteers' check (free of charge) for this purpose. If all adult members of your family have this check, you must provide your WWCC number for our verification.

3. Do I need to tell you if my household composition has changed?

A: Yes! - You may have a child who turned 18, or a new child, new housemate, new pet, etc. You must inform us of such changes as soon as possible. This is especially important if you have a new family member who is over the age of 18 - he/she MUST obtain a valid WWCC and submit their WWCC number to us for verification. **It is illegal to engage in homestay for under-18 students if any adult member of your household does not have a valid WWCC.**

You must also provide an email address to which we can send important documents, such as students' moving notices, and guideline changes.

4. How many students can I take?

A: No more than three (3) in total, from us and any other homestay agencies. You must inform us if you exceed this limit, or if you will exceed your limit by accepting a student from us when we check your availability.

5. How do students know what behaviour is expected of them?

A: Generally, our partner colleges give students guidelines on Homestay living, to which they must abide as a condition of their enrolment. Each college's requirements may differ slightly. You are, however, strongly encouraged to develop a set of 'house rules', outlining factors such as curfew, electricity/internet usage, shower time, etc. This house rule should not contradict any of our Homestay Guidelines, or any college rules. If you are in any doubt please contact us.

6. Do I need to be home when the student arrives for the first time? How about every day?

A: Yes. We will communicate the student's initial arrival date/time to you at least 48 hours in advance (if possible). If this timeframe is not feasible we would usually contact

you to check if you are available to receive the student.

For students under 18, you (or a trusted, responsible person) should be at home to receive them at the end of their school day.

7. What do I need to do on the student's first few days?

A: As a matter of priority, you should show the student your home, discuss house rules, and understand any immediate needs (e.g. double check allergies). Before the student attends college, you should show them how to catch public transport to the college, as well as show them relevant local amenities (e.g. supermarkets, bank).

Critical incidents/illness/incidents

8. If my student is sick, do I need to take them to the doctor?

A: You are generally expected to assist students who fell ill or have minor medical issues, by taking them to relevant health professionals. You must also inform the student's caregiver (if applicable) (Please also refer to Paragraph 11 for critical incidents.)

9. Do I have to pay for student's medical expenses?

A: No – student is expected to pay. If you choose to pay you are not entitled to reimbursement. They should have medical insurance as part of their student visa conditions.

10. Who is responsible for student's welfare in general?

A: If the student is under 18, a caregiver/guardian may be appointed. The caregiver should visit the student within a few days of their arrival in Australia. The caregiver should give you their name and contact details if you have any concerns about the student's welfare and/or other issues (also see 'Dispute resolution' below.) The caregiver should perform official functions for the students, e.g. opening

bank account, sign permission slips, liaise with student’s college and/or family about welfare, etc. You are not expected to perform these functions.

If a caregiver is not appointed, please assist the student in the above-stated functions. Any welfare issues with the student you can contact us, we will act in a liaison role with the student’s college to resolve the issue.

You are expected to provide a basic level of on-premises supervision, as to their general wellbeing, basic discipline, school attendance, and curfew. The homestay environment should be that you can reasonably easily notice the student’s movement within the premises without unduly breaching their privacy (e.g. if they sneak in/out, smoking). For this reason, homestays that consist of a granny flat, or hosts who regularly leave students alone at their premises at night, may be inappropriate.

If you have any concerns regarding supervising the student, please contact the student’s caregiver (and also see Paragraph 32 regarding dispute resolution.)

11. What is a critical incident, and what should I do?

A: A critical incident is a traumatic event (or threat of such), within or outside Australia, which causes extreme levels of stress, fear, or injury. They include:

- Student missing/unable to be located;
- Severe verbal and/or physical aggression;
- Death or serious injury (or any such threats);
- Natural disaster;
- Issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, drug or alcohol abuse.

If your student is involved in a critical incident, you MUST inform immediately:

- Us (as Homestay agents);
- The student’s caregiver (if applicable);
- Other security personnel as appropriate (e.g. police, fire, ambulance).

12. What if I have any concerns about the student’s academic/personal issues?

A: Student may experience issues that are concerning but not immediately critical, e.g. studies, personal issues, etc. If you feel comfortable to do so you may approach the students and seek to assist. Otherwise please contact the student’s caregiver (if applicable), the college, and/or us. Please be sensitive especially in the case of personal issues, and avoid private discussions that may invite misunderstandings.

13. What if I need to go away for some time, e.g. holidays?

A: Please notify us as soon as practicable so we can arrange alternative accommodation for the student. If you wish to take your student on holidays, the student must obtain permission from their caregiver and/or their parents. **Under no circumstances can the student be left in your home either alone or with people not registered with us as part of your homestay, without prior agreement with us**

Student behaviour

14. Must students observe a curfew?

A: This depends on the student’s college’s rules. If the college does not set a curfew, the following should apply. Please state this clearly in your house rules.

Student’s age:	16 years or above	Under 16
Sunday – Thursday	9:00pm	7:30pm
Friday - Saturday	10:30pm	9:00pm

15. Can students stay elsewhere overnight?

A: If student has a caregiver, yes but only after the caregiver has given permission. If student has no caregiver, consent can only be given by the college, not by yourself or us.

The student must inform you if they plan to stay out overnight. This should only happen occasionally. If you are

in any doubt please contact the student's caregiver or us.

16. Can the student use our telephone for long-distance calls?

A: Students should not use your telephone without your permission, especially to make calls that incur high fees (e.g. international calls). You are advised to block such calls. We do encourage you and your student reach a reasonable understanding regarding domestic phone usage (including using their international phone card, if they have one).

Meals/Hygiene

17. Do I have to cook every meal for students?

A: No – as a homestay host you are expected to prepare 16 meals – school days: breakfast and dinner; non-school days (e.g. weekends): breakfast, lunch (if student stays home), and dinner. Breakfast can be self-served in nature (e.g. bread and cereal).

18. Will I know if a student has an allergy or food preferences (e.g. religious reasons)?

A: Yes – all allergies and food preferences will be provided our 'information of your homestay student' before each student's arrival. We may also discuss such preferences with you before allocating a student to you.

19. Must the student clean his/her own room? Can I clean it for them?

A: Students are expected to keep their room in a neat and tidy state. Please provide them with the necessary cleaning products. If you wish to clean for the student, please discuss and reach an agreement with him/her before doing so, to avoid misunderstandings. You cannot charge students to clean their rooms.

Whilst we encourage students to be engaged in minor assistance in your household as a matter of courtesy (e.g. taking their dishes into the kitchen after meals), they are

not expected to assist in maintaining other areas of your premises that they have not used and/or have not caused unreasonable uncleanliness.

Please also note students must not place wet clothes in their room, and/or to use excessive amount of power outlet extensions, for fire safety reasons.

20. How long can students use the shower for each day?

A: We recommend a 'common-sense' approach to the issue, and try not to prescribe a 'time limit'. Since homestay is about treating the student as part of your family, whatever standard your family adopts should apply, and should be in your 'house rules'.

21. Do I have to wash the student's clothes?

A: No – students are expected to do their own washing; however you should provide them with washing detergent, and allow access to the washing machine at least once a week. If you choose to wash students' clothes, this should only be on a voluntary basis, and you may wish to avoid handling students' undergarment for hygiene and cultural reasons.

Finances

22. I would like to receive payment directly from the students – can I do that?

A: As part of your agreement with us, you should not receive direct payments from students for providing homestay services. This is for your protection, as otherwise we may not be able to help you if there is any financial dispute. We will only pay for homestay that's been arranged by us.

23. What happens if a student wants to know my financial arrangements with you?

A: Again for your benefit, please refrain from discussing financial arrangements with students. If they have any

such queries, please direct them to either their college's relevant personnel or to us.

24. Do I have to share my internet connection with the student?

A: No; however if you wish to do so, internet is not covered in our payment to you. You may negotiate payment from the student for internet use. Our current recommendation is \$10-15 per week.

If you choose to share your internet connection with your student, we strongly suggest you clearly state in your house rules your expectations, such as restrictions on data usage (e.g. no streaming), downloading of explicit/ illegal/ copyrighted material, etc.

25. How much notice must a student give if he/she wishes to leave my home?

A: At least two weeks' written notice, which must be made to either his/her college or ourselves. This may be waived in exceptional circumstances. This notice is not required if student chooses to leave after his/her first four weeks of accommodation with you.

If a student leaves your homestay/stays away from homestay for extended periods and you did not receive a prior notification from us, please inform us immediately. Please also remember students have a curfew to observe.

26. How much notice must I give if I want my student to leave my home?

A: At least two weeks' written notice, unless in exceptional circumstances. We must also be notified.

27. Can you guarantee how long a student may stay at my home?

A: We cannot guarantee the length of a student's stay beyond what is stated in our agreement to you, which is usually four weeks. We also cannot guarantee student placements at your home, which is subject to student

enrolments, availability, and suitability.

28. What is your cancellation policy?

A: Occasionally a student may cancel his/her homestay booking due to unforeseen circumstances. We will let you know as soon as practicable if this occurs, and endeavour to find another student to place with you. We do not pay cancellation fee if:

- A student's course is cancelled; or
- If the booking is cancelled two or more days prior to his/her arrival; or
- Delay is minor and caused by unforeseen factors (e.g. flight); or
- If a replacement student can be placed to you on the day of the cancelled student's arrival. (This also applies if a student leaves your homestay without providing due notice, but a new student can be provided within the first student's applicable notice period.)

29. Will you disclose our personal or financial records to anyone?

A: No – we take our Homestay families' privacy very seriously. We will never disclose your personal details to anyone except to educational institutions in the course of our homestay operation. We may also hand over certain details (including financial) to relevant law enforcement bodies if legally obliged to do so.

Insurance

30. Do I need to take out insurance in my role as Homestay host?

A: You must obtain appropriate levels of insurance covering people and properties under your care. This includes public liability insurance of no less than ten million dollars (\$10,000,000). Please note that as Homestay students involve financial arrangements, your existing home/contents insurance MAY not cover losses resulting from such arrangements.

We strongly recommend you obtain insurance appropriate for Homestay hosts (such as [Homestay Host Insurance Plus Cover](#)¹). Alternatively, you must show written advice from a qualified insurance professional stating that you are covered.

(Please note this information relating to insurance is general in nature, please consult relevant professionals for your circumstances. Any references to insurance professionals are not endorsements or requirements, only suggestions.)

31. What if the student damaged my property?

A: You must report any allegations of such damage to us. We will liaise with the student and you to arrive at a satisfactory solution. Please refrain from directly demanding compensation from your student, as miscommunication may occur. Please also refer to Paragraph 30 regarding your need to obtain appropriate insurance.

Please note: In no event shall WINCS be liable for any damages arising out of any act or omission of the student placed in your home.

Dispute resolution

32. What happens if I have a dispute with the student?

A: Vast majority of students value their experience at homestay, and disputes are very rare. However people of different cultural backgrounds living together may have the rare conflict. We do not prescribe set rules on how conflicts must be resolved (except for those under 'critical incidents' in Paragraph 11), but suggest the following tiered approach:

- Step 0 – establish clear house rules, encourage open communication, so that expectations are mutually understood and respected.

- Step 1 – private discussion with the student – a 'quiet word', preferably involving another adult household member, may address most minor issues and misunderstandings. If this does not address the issue...
- Step 2 – contact us and the student's caregiver (if applicable) – we will liaise with each other and the college in resolving the issue.

¹ <http://www.homestayhostinsuranceplus.com/>