

How to be A *Perfect Host*!

If you are reading this as first-time host, we hope you find that this information sheet makes the first time less daunting and answers some of your questions. If you are reading it as an experienced host, it can act as a check list of everything you do prior to the visit.

First of all, thank you for your generous invitation to host a student. Our research shows that these visits are something that both hosts and students benefit from. We hope that you will have an enjoyable hosting experience - below are a few proven ways to ensure that the visit goes well and that it is a success for everyone.

All hosts and homes are different and we know that this means that all hosts' requirements are too. If you have any specific rules, please make sure you communicate these with the students in advance e.g. please bring slippers as I do not allow shoes to be worn in the house. This will mean that students are aware of the requirements and can prepare for them in advance.

It is also worth mentioning that, even when students talk the same language as us, words can have different meanings. There are also cultural differences to consider between what is acceptable to ask or is an acceptable subject for conversation and what would be crossing "a line". It is always worth checking with the student if they are happy to have the conversation.

Now that you have been matched to your student, please take time to prepare for the visit. Here are a few things to do and keep in mind:

BEFORE THE VISIT:

- Contact your student **as soon as possible** to discuss the invitation and their travel arrangements.
- Inform your student of any requirement such as a preferred station or time of arrival. It is important that the student knows this so that they can research travel arrangements.
- Please share with the student in advance what your plans are. Many hosts involve the students in this plan, but we also understand that you might not be able to alter all of your normal routine just because the student is visiting.
 - For example you might have been invited to visit friends, have plans to go to the theatre, attend a community event or have a specific reason for inviting the student to join you this weekend. Where this is the case, please discuss the details of this with the student in advance, including any costs involved and confirm if they are happy to attend.
 - For some students, visiting a place of worship is important whilst some prefer not to attend services whilst on homestay. Please make it clear to the student before they arrive if you intend to include a religious service in the weekend experience and always offer them an alternative activity if they do not want to accompany you.
- One of the main things students always enjoy is the food that they share with their hosts. Please discuss with the students first and just check that they are happy to share the meals that you are suggesting. This will eliminate any awkwardness if the students is not able to eat something or does not enjoy something that you have spent hours preparing.

DURING THE VISIT:

- **Show curiosity** by talking to your guest and asking questions.
 - There are various topics to get things started: your family, home, their studies, your hobbies, films you have seen, holidays you have been on, etc.
 - Your visit is a great opportunity to find out more about their country's history, traditions, as well as a unique opportunity to explore other people's way of life, so don't be afraid to ask questions!
 - Avoid starting conversations about potentially sensitive subjects such as personal/family income, views on racism or controversial politics as it may make your guest feel uncomfortable.
- The visit may be full of surprises and new things, so **be open** to doing things you may have never tried before.
 - Do **communicate any problems**, though, and let your guest know if you do not feel comfortable with certain topics, activities, etc.
- Students have been advised that they should try to limit their time on mobile devices, but we do ask hosts to remember that for many students this is their contact with home and their friends. If this is something you want to address, please do mention it before the students arrive.
 - It is also worth mentioning that many students use mobiles to take photos.
 - If for example you have a rule about no phones during mealtimes, let the students know
- If you plan on taking a student to an event or an attraction, please discuss with them in advance so that they can bring **money** to pay for their ticket.
- **Show your students that you are interested in them** and their culture.
- You may be the only person from your country that your guest will ever stay with, so **be the best ambassador that you can be!**
- Remember that there may be **cultural differences** and this could be as simple as the amount of times your visitor smiles or their use of please and thank you
- **Include students in your day to day life**, lots of conversations can happen whilst you are washing up, walking the dog or laying the table. Students have signed up to be a part of your family for the weekend and do not expect you to do all of this for them.

AFTER THE VISIT:

- **You will be sent an email with a link to the feedback form, please fill this in as it helps us to monitor visitors and also means we can feedback to our partners on how the visits went.**

Also, keep in mind the following:

CANCELLATIONS

- **Students have such a limited time here in the UK, a cancelled visit might mean a student misses out on the opportunity. With this in mind we ask that if a host needs to cancel they inform us as soon as possible so that we can look for an alternative for the student.**
Your student is looking forward to meeting you and will be preparing for the visit. Whilst we know that some situations are unavoidable, we do ask that hosts do not cancel unless absolutely necessary.

EXTRA GUESTS

- Students can not just bring an extra guest with them - if they ask if this is possible, please let us know as they have been told not to ask this question.
- Anyone interested in the visit must be **an international student**.

We hope that you enjoy your visit. The team in the office and our volunteer Regional Organisers love to hear about the visit and ... thank you for being *A Perfect Host*!