

ACADIA UNIVERSITY

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTRE

HOMESTAY FAMILY MANUAL



My best memory of EAP is cooking with my host family and laughing and chatting with them. I had a wonderful time with them.

Nozomi Miwa – Japan

WELCOME TO THE HOMESTAY PROGRAM!

Dear Host,

We are delighted that you have decided to host an international student while he or she takes on the challenge of learning English at Acadia.

The experience for both of you will be extremely rewarding, and your household will be enriched by the culture and traditions your student brings to your home.

The enclosed information aims to address some questions or concerns you may have, and to provide you with some guidance in certain aspects of the homestay program.

Please do not hesitate to contact Ted Salmon, Homestay Coordinator or the English Language Centre if you would like to discuss any issues that might arise.

Please also feel free to contact us if you would simply like to share any details or pictures of your hosting experience along the way. We look forward to getting to know you in the process!

Sincerely,

Sharon Churchill Roe
Manager, English Language Centre
902.585.1471
Sharon.churchill@acadiau.ca

AND

Ted Salmon
Homestay Coordinator
tsalmon43@gmail.com

DESCRIPTION OF THE HOMESTAY PROGRAM FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Note to Host Families: This is the description your student has been given. We have included this here so you may have the same understanding of the program as your student.

Living with a Canadian family is one of the best ways to learn to speak English. While living in a Canadian home, you get to know the language as it is spoken every day. After learning and practicing in the classroom with your teachers and classmates, you will enjoy the individual help and attention you receive from your homestay family.

An equally important benefit of living with a Canadian family is that you can do daily research about the culture and customs of our multicultural society. Also, you can introduce your own culture to your Canadian family.

Acadia's Homestay families enjoy hosting students from around the world. These families are prepared to welcome you as a member of their family. They expect you to join them for at least one meal a day, (usually the evening meal, dinner) where everyone enjoys good food and conversation around the dinner table. The family is prepared to help you with your homework and assignments, and you in turn must also offer to help with the dishes or other small household chores.

Remember that you will be eating the kind of food that your homestay family prepares for their family, so it will probably be very different from what you are used to eating. However, most host family will be happy to learn how to cook new dishes from your culture, particularly if you help prepare the meal. Ask your homestay family about this. Let them know what kinds of things you like.

There is no such thing as a "typical" Canadian family: Canada is proud of its multicultural character. No two of our host families are alike. We have single mothers with younger children, couples without children, families with cats or dogs, middle-aged families with grown-up children who have left home, retired individuals who love company, and homestay parents who have immigrated to Canada themselves and understand the difficulties of adjusting to a new culture.

Homestay is a cultural and linguistic experience and more than renting a room. But it is also a business agreement and you must sign a "contract" agreement. A copy of this agreement is included in this booklet for you to keep.

The Homestay Coordinator will check with you and your families every now and then to make sure that you are happy and comfortable in your Canadian home.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOMESTAY HOSTS

FACILITIES AND FEES

Homestay fees include the following:

- A private room with a bed, linens, closet, desk, chair, and adequate lighting for study.
- Use of utilities including internet, hot water, electricity, etc.
- Food for three wholesome meals per day
- Laundry facilities

MEALS

Students must be provided with 3 meals per day. Breakfast can be self-serve as can lunch. Dinner, however, should be eaten together with family members whenever possible. For many students, this will be the main opportunity to practice their English. As for your own family, provide an assortment of healthy snacks. Find out what foods your student likes best. Host families often enjoy learning how to make food from the student's culture too. You should not expect your student to cook entire meals unless he/she asks for the opportunity.

Breakfast: Show your student what they may have for breakfast or ask them what they would like to have. Students can prepare their own breakfast if food is provided, and you teach them how to use your kitchen.

Lunch: Students must be provided with a daily lunch. Show your student where the food is so that he/she can pack their own bag lunch. Some students like to bring leftovers to heat up in the microwave oven at school. Have microwavable containers available for such use.

Dinner: Your student should let you know if he/she does not plan to be home for dinner. You may keep dinner for him/her if they are not home when dinner is ready. If you are not going to be home for dinner it is your responsibility to ensure that the student has food available. If you take your homestay student to a restaurant, you will pay the bill.

Snacks: Please have food available for snacks outside mealtimes as well.

Ask your student what he/she would like to eat and have them go shopping with you for groceries. If your student requests a food that is relatively costly, compromise with them by explaining the cost and splitting it – the student will get what he/she wants and you won't have to "break the bank" for one meal's worth of shrimp! If the food is only for the student, it would be reasonable for the student to buy it for him/herself.

Students could be asked to help set the table, clean up after supper, or help wash the dishes.

QUANTITY AND VARIETY

You should remember that many of the students are youth, and may have a larger appetite than your own. If you are uncertain about how much or how little food is appropriate for you to provide, please refer to the Canada food guide.

USE OF THE KITCHEN

If it is alright for your homestay student to cook, please discuss with them your kitchen rules. Also show your student how to use the appliances and how to prevent personal injury or damage to appliances and countertops. Some international students would be used to cooking in Celsius temperatures, so they will need a reminder that Canadian ovens are in Fahrenheit.

LAUNDRY

Students in homestay must have access to laundry facilities. Some students prefer to do their own laundry once they have been shown how. Some students prefer to have their laundry done with the clothes of the rest of the family. Usually, the host family and the student will talk about what is best.

You should also tell the student about changing the linen on his/her bed. Again, the host family and the student will usually talk about the way this will be done and a lesson will probably need to be given the first time. Don't assume the student knows how to change their sheets. It is often the responsibility of the student to change his/her own bed and keep their room tidy.

INTERACTION

Students will be welcomed into the home with the spirit that they are new members of the family. They will be invited to partake in family outings and other activities. In short, they will be treated like a member of the extended family. Because you are acting as their 'parent away from home' you will at times be required to show the same patience, understanding and flexibility of all good parents. You will also need an open mind and a non-judgmental attitude as you interact with young people who have been raised in a culture quite different from your own.

Try to spend at least an hour a day with your student speaking English. Although many Canadian families use their supertime to socialize and get caught up on the activities of the day, this may be very stressful for the student and he/she may remain quiet, so focused time with 1 or 2 family members may be important.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES AND EXPENSES

You may invite your student for an activity, outing, restaurant meal, or even a vacation. It is a good idea to discuss financial expenses with your student when discussing the invitation. Some families will have the ability to pay for you, but others may not.

If you invite your student to a restaurant as part of the normal meal schedule, you should pay for their meal. If it is a special occasion or an expensive restaurant, you may ask the student to contribute to the cost. If they are expected to pay, they should always be given the option of not attending and staying home. You should provide your student with a meal that they can have at home while you are away.

You may also want to take your student out to experience Canadian lifestyle. If you are inviting them to join an activity, be sure to let them know what they should bring and whether they will need to pay for some of the costs. They should always be given the option of not participating if they are not interested, have other plans, or do not want to pay the cost.

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

FAMILY RULES

Each Homestay family will have their own rules pertaining to kitchen and laundry use, visitors, smoking and more. It is important to talk about these rules with your students and provide a **written** list for them to keep.

USE OF THE FAMILY BATHROOM

You must provide your student with towels and face cloths. Advise the student where to put soiled towels. Students should clean up the tub, shower or sink after use to leave them clean for the next person. Many homes have a limited supply of hot water so you should advise how long showers should be. Remember to explain to the students if there are two different switches for the light and the fan. A daily shower would not be unexpected.

SPEAKING ENGLISH

You are a main source of English conversation for your international student. Take time each day to talk, to listen and to encourage English. If you hear your student speaking his/her native language, gently remind him/her of the “English only” advice Acadia gives its students.

There is a significant difference between formal classroom English and informal casual conversation. Homestay is a wonderful opportunity for the student to learn new words and expressions. Speak clearly and slowly to the students, as needed. If they do not understand, repeat the sentence more slowly. If your student continues having difficulty with certain phrases or questions, try wording them differently. Often, writing your sentence down will help them to understand as some students’ understanding of written English is better than their comprehension of spoken English.

VISITORS

Students should be given permission to entertain friends in the family home at reasonable hours and within reasonable limits. Rules might include a limit of 1 or 2 visitors; an open bedroom door for visitors of opposite sex; and visitor departure by 10pm.

SMOKING/DRINKING

Very few host families allow smoking in their homes. If you do allow it, advise your student where it is permitted or if it is ok outside only. Drinking is not permitted in their homes unless it is with host family. Use of cannabis is not permitted within homestay homes by hosts or students.

HEAT

International students often find Canada cold. You may think they keep temperatures too high, but let them adjust to a gradual lowering of temperatures rather than insisting on limiting the heat. Encourage them to put on an extra sweater.

ASSISTING YOUR STUDENT

As a Homestay parent, you will need to help your student settle into their life in Canada. This may include helping them set up a bank account, showing them where to buy certain things, and helping them find their way around.

TRANSPORTATION

The host family is responsible for showing students how to get to Acadia on foot (if in walking distance) or by using the bus, and how to get home again. You may also need to show them where to get bus tickets. You may offer to give a ride on occasion, but are not required to do so.

EMERGENCIES

Ask for the name and telephone number of your student's parents, or someone else to call in case of emergency. Give them your work, mobile and home phone numbers in case they become sick while at school. Instruct them on how to call 9-1-1 and how to evacuate the home in case of emergency. You may also call Acadia Safety and Security for assistance 902 585 1103.

DEALING WITH ISSUES

Please always remember that most problems come from communication and language-related problems. Never forget that your students are new to this culture and our language. If your student says or does something that makes you upset, it may be the result of some language or cross-cultural misunderstanding. Be patient. Politely and directly discuss problems with your student. Try to imagine how difficult it would be for you to live in your student's country without violating customs and without saying something that might be misunderstood. If you can, turn the conflict into a learning opportunity for everyone involved.

If the issue can not be resolved directly with the student, please do not hesitate in contacting the Homestay Coordinator or English Language Centre directly.

- Homestay Coordinator Ted Salmon tsalmon43@gmail.com
- ELC Manager Sharon Churchill Sharon.churchill@acadiau.ca
- [Counselling Centre](#) counselling@acadiau.ca
- [Equity Officer](#) equity@acadiau.ca

The Counselling Centre offers a confidential, safe, and caring place for students to access support. They offer mental health services to enhance and support students' living and learning. They provide individual and group counselling, and can also connect you with other campus and community resources.

The Acadia Equity Officer is available to discuss concerns related to harassment or discrimination, as outlined by [The Acadia University Policy against Harassment and Discrimination](#)

REMOVAL OF A STUDENT ON SHORT NOTICE

While the ELC endeavors to match each student with an appropriate family, it recognizes that in exceptional circumstances a student may need to be moved to a new family. While placements are meant to be ongoing, the ELC reserves the right to remove a student from a family home with little or

no notice if it is judged that the move serves the best interests of either the student or family or both. This will be done with consideration for all parties to the best of our abilities.

The Homestay Coordinator will submit a written report of this change and the reasons for it to the ELC and a copy will be sent to the family. Any balance prepaid to the family, but not used by the student must be returned to Acadia University within 2 weeks of the student's departure, regardless of the circumstances that led to the student's removal from the home.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

If a student arrives prior to the first day of the month, the student will pay the homestay directly \$32 per night for each night the he/she is present until the end of the calendar month.

On the first day of each calendar month, students will pay the homestay fee (\$950) directly to the homestay, in full, regardless of absences due to Christmas holiday, etc.

See detailed payment schedule below.

Date	Fee	Amount	Method	Notes
Prior to arrival	Homestay application fee	\$250	To Acadia University	Can be paid by wire transfer, online (Global Pay) or through Student Accounts
Upon Arrival	First month fee	\$32/night until end of the month	Directly to Homestay	For example, if you arrive on September 15 th , you will pay your homestay \$512 (16 days * \$32/day)
1 st day of each month	Homestay fee	\$950	Directly to Homestay	
First day of last partial month	Remaining Nights	\$32/night until departure	Directly to Homestay	If the student is not leaving on the last day of a month, they will pay \$32/night for each remaining night before departure.

MOVING OUT

Students must give at least 6-8 weeks' notice before leaving the Homestay. They must notify the English Language Centre and the Homestay family by filling in a Homestay Move-Out Form (available at the English Language Centre office).

If the student moves out partway through a month, the student will pay the homestay host for each remaining night until departure at a rate of \$32 per night.

CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock refers to the psychological disorientation experienced by people living in radically different cultural environments. The result is an anxiety that comes when all familiar cultural props, signs and symbols are unknown.

Culture shock ranges from mild irritation to deep-seated psychological panic or crisis and involves the following dimensions:

- A sense of confusion over expected role behavior
- A sense of surprise, even disgust, after realizing some of the features of the new culture
- A sense of loss of the old familiar surroundings (friends, possessions, etc.) and cultural patterns
- A sense of being rejected (or at least not accepted) by members of the new culture
- A sense of a loss of self-esteem because of the inability to function in the new culture resulting in an imperfect meeting of objectives
- A feeling of having little or no control over one's own environment
- A strong sense of doubt when old values are brought into question

Despite the word SHOCK, culture shock does not occur quickly nor is it the result of a single event, it usually occurs in four stages. Stages may last days, weeks or months, and do not always progress from one to the next.

- A) **The Honeymoon Stage:** In the beginning the student will have a positive attitude as all that is new is exotic and exciting. Attitudes about host country and one's capacity to operate in it successfully are unrealistically positive. This stage can last from several days to several weeks. The similarities between the new country and one's own country are what are noticed leading to the erroneous conclusion that all people are alike.
- B) **Irritation and Hostility:** Honeymoons do not last forever. Within several weeks, problems arise at school, work and the marketplace. Things taken for granted simply don't occur. A number of small problems become insurmountable differences. Now it is the differences, not the similarities that are most noticeable. It is becoming clear that one will be in this situation for at least the next few months. This is the crisis stage!
- C) **Gradual Adjustment:** This stage marks the passing of the crisis and a gradual recovery. It can be so gradual that the student may not notice. Slowly an understanding emerges of how to operate within the new culture. Some cultural clues now begin to make sense, patterns emerge, some things can be predicted, some language is understandable, and some problems are being resolved. A capacity to laugh at one's situation is a sure sign that adjustment is well underway.
- D) **Biculturalism:** The final stage, representing full, or near full, recovery, involves the ability to function effectively in two different cultures. The local customs that were so unsettling months earlier are now both understood and appreciated.

MINIMIZING CULTURE SHOCK

The international student most likely to do well is the person who

- has a realistic understanding of the problems and promises of international contracts;
- possesses a number of important cross-cultural coping skills, and
- sees this as a vast opportunity for personal growth.

The advice for the student is to be prepared and be patient. Know that cultures are learned, and that most parts of culture are interconnected no matter how incomprehensible they may appear at first. Become familiar with local patterns of communication, verbal and non-verbal, opening a new window onto the rest of the culture.

Some cross-cultural tips for families:

- Encourage students to see friends, spend time with family
- Let the student know that you understand what culture shock is, and that you want to help
- Do special things for the student to help him/her recover (prepare native foods, etc)
- Include students in all family activities (grocery shopping, go to a movie or dinner, sports activities, etc)

MAJOR SYMPTOMS IN RELATIVELY SEVERE CASES OF CULTURE SHOCK

- Homesickness
- Boredom
- Withdrawal (spending excessive amounts of time reading, see only people of own culture, avoiding contact with hosts)
- Need for excessive amounts of sleep
- Compulsive eating and/or drinking
- Irritability
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Family tension and conflict
- Stereotyping of hosts
- Hostility towards hosts
- Loss of ability to work/study effectively
- Unexplainable fits of weeping
- Physical ailments (psychosomatic illnesses)

If you believe that your student is having serious difficulties adjusting or problems other than culture shock, please contact the English Language Centre right away.

SAVING FACE

In many cultures, the idea of “saving face” is a deeply ingrained cultural value. Saving face means making efforts to protect the feelings, dignity, and self-respect of oneself and others. Canadians can often speak very directly to one another, openly disagree, and offer criticism. However, a person from a culture which values face-saving would feel very uncomfortable and would go to great lengths to avoid disagreeing with or offending others.

In a Homestay context, this is often apparent in interactions where a student is asked his or her opinion on a subject (e.g. Canadian food); a student may offer an opinion which she or he feels will protect the feelings of the host, regardless of the true opinion he or she may hold. In addition, if the student is given a direct invitation to something she or he would rather not do, rather than risk offending the host by declining, he or she may accept the invitation and then later may give a reason she or he can no longer attend.

CONCLUSIONS

In short, be patient and understanding. For many students, this is their first time away from home, and their first time outside their country. Being a young adult can be confusing enough. Being a young adult in a foreign culture is even more so. Patience, kindness, humor, and understanding can go a long way in resolving challenges along the way.

HOMESTAY FAMILY CHECKLIST

Pre-Arrival

- Prepare room for student's arrival
- Complete Criminal Check (must be updated every 5 years)
- Complete host family/English Language Centre MOU forms.
- Prepare a key to the house, local maps and bus schedule
- The English Language Centre will make arrangements for your student to be picked up at the airport and taken to your home. We will let you know ahead of time when to expect your new student.

Arrival

- Help your student open a bank account.
- Discuss household expectations with your student upon his/her arrival. Provide a written list for the student to keep. Topics might include the following:
 - Kitchen privileges
 - Bathroom use
 - Laundry facilities
 - Curfew
 - Speaking English
 - Visitors
 - Smoking/drinking
- Show your student how to get to the university and back home again by bus, if needed. It is best to actually ride the bus route with them.
- Take your student shopping (toothpaste, shampoo, etc.)
- Show your student the nearest mailbox, mall, grocery store, clinic, etc.
- Provide a list of important phone numbers and your home address for your student.
- Plan a few special activities to do with your student while they are part of your family.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between

The English Language Centre

and

_____ (name of family)

PURPOSE

The above parties hereby agree to abide by the general guidelines and regulations set out by The English Language Centre (ELC) as per the Homestay Information Booklet for Families. The programs aim is to provide accommodation and meals to international students, and to help students learn English in an immersion environment and to experience living in a Canadian home setting.

GENERAL

ELC takes responsibility for the following:

- To provide each student with a Homestay Information Booklet, which includes guidance on adjusting to life with a Canadian family, culture shock, and other relevant matters.
- To retain on file a signed copy of the contract between the student and the family.
- To issue payment to the family for the final month by cheque mailed to the family's home.
- If a student cancels or is not able to attend the program, ELC will not pay the family any portion of the expected fee but will make every effort to replace the student with another appropriate match.
- To provide advice and/or referrals to an appropriate individual or agency if requested.
- To act as a liaison between the family and the Homestay Coordinator and between the family and student as appropriate and to coordinate monitoring of the experience by the Homestay Coordinator.

The Homestay agrees to provide international students placed in its home with the following:

- A heated, private bedroom furnished with a bed, closet, desk, chair, and lighting sufficient for studying.
- To provide three meals each day (breakfast can be self-serve and lunch can be "pack your own", but sufficient quantity and variety of foods as prescribed by the Canada Food Guide must be provided).
- A written list of family rules and emergency procedures to be discussed with the student.
- Laundry facilities and instructions to the student and lesson on how to use them
- Reasonable access to hot water, wifi, a bathroom and other ordinary household functions and privileges (TV, DVD player, stereo, etc).
- Permission to entertain friends in the family home at reasonable hours and within reasonable limits
- A supportive home environment complete with regular conversational interaction during the student's entire period of study.

The Homestay agrees to

- Inform the English Language Centre of any problems that arise.
- Inform the English Language Centre if there are any changes to the living environment or family structure (new pets, smoking restrictions, number of people living in your home, moving to a new address, etc.)
- Provide ELC with the dates of any planned or sudden absence so that the student may be placed, if necessary, in an alternative home on a temporary basis. The payment to the family will be adjusted accordingly and negotiated between the homestay family and the student.
- Provide an updated Criminal Records Check every 5 years.
- Submit to a Homestay Inspection every two years by the Homestay Coordinator to determine if the conditions of this MOU are being met.

REMOVAL ON SHORT NOTICE

If a student must be removed from a homestay, any balance prepaid to the family, but not used by the student must be returned to Acadia University within 2 weeks of the student's departure, regardless of the circumstances that led to the student's removal from the home.

STATEMENT OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Acadia University is committed to becoming a culturally safe and anti-oppressive community. This can only be achieved where there are simultaneous efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination and harassment from our campus community, including the elimination of all discrimination, harassment and violence based on one's identity, including but not limited to, age, gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, gender expression, and Indigeneity.

The Acadia University English Language Centre Homestay environments is to be inclusive of gender identity, gender expression, sex, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, ability, age, etc. Hosts and students expect to be always treated respectfully in all interactions. Non-sexist, non-racist, non-homophobic, non-transphobic and non-heterosexist language is expected in homestay. Please see [Acadia's Policy Against Harassment and Discrimination](#) for more information.

DURATION OF UNDERSTANDING

This agreement is effective as of the last date of signing by the parties as stipulated below and is of an indefinite duration. The agreement may be terminated by either party for any reason with a 1-month's written notice, notwithstanding ELC's right to remove a student with little or no notice from the family home.

Acadia Administrator name, PRINTED	Signature Date

Homestay name, PRINTED	Signature Date

STUDENT FAMILY HOMESTAY AGREEMENT

The homestay family and the student must review, discuss sign and return this form to the English Language Centre (ELC) within 2 days of the student's first day of studies.

The family agrees to:

- Provide a friendly, welcoming family environment which is sensitive to the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student
- Respect the student's privacy, personal property and individual rights.
- Provide a private heated bedroom with a bed, closet, desk and lamp.
- Provide wholesome foods for the student, 3 meals per day.
- Provide a key to the home.
- Allow the student kitchen privileges to make his/her meals or snacks within reasonable times.
- To provide a map or clear written instruction on how to travel to and from classes on public transportation and to escort the student on the first trip.
- Provide instructions on how to use the bus system, laundry machines and other household items.
- Assist the student in setting up a bank account.
- Invite the student regularly to participate in family outings and activities.
- To discuss Canadian laws, customs and social behavior as occasions arise.
- Provide a written list of family rules and emergency procedures and discuss them with the student.
- To discuss any particular house rules (schedules, visitors, meals, bathroom etiquette, smoking, use of alcohol, etc.) using simple English.

The student agrees to:

- Remain in the homestay for a minimum of one term of study.
- Respect the family's privacy, personal property and individual rights.
- Respect the homestay family rules.
- Keep his/her room in a neat and tidy condition.
- Notify the family of any absence, for mealtimes, overnight or for one or more days.
- Make every effort to adjust to Canadian culture, including food and customs.
- Participate in the family's activities and share information about his or her culture.
- Notify the family and the homestay co-ordinator at least 6-8 weeks prior to leaving your homestay.
- Return the key to the family on departure from the home.

We have discussed this agreement on _____ (date) and agree to abide by its terms.

Student Name, printed	Signature	Date
Homestay Name, printed	Signature	Date

Please email, mail or drop off to The English Language Centre, 26 Crowell Drive, Acadia University, Wolfville, NS B4P 2R6 elc@acadiau.ca