HOMESTAY GUIDELINES

Understanding Homestay: the role and responsibilities of families and international students.
# Kelvin Grove State College: Homestay Guidelines 2012

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YOUR FAMILY’S IMPORTANT DECISION.
You and your parents have made a big decision to come to Australia to complete your education. This decision will provide you with many extra benefits, but of course will also present you with some problems. This booklet is designed to try to give you as much information as possible in order to minimise any difficulties or confusion that may occur.

BEFORE YOU START YOUR HOMESTAY
Reasons for Homestay
Home stay in Australia is popular. This means that many of our families will have already had an overseas visitor stay with them. It is important to realise that families decide to have a home stay for a variety of reasons such as:

- An interest in overseas countries
- Desire to make friends
- Desire for companionship
- Financial needs

Most families will have a combination of these reasons and Kelvin Grove State College has interviewed all the families thoroughly ensuring that they will provide a pleasant and comfortable environment for home stay students.

Homestays are not hotels.

Home stay accommodation is different to normal tourist accommodation. The amount you pay per week to live in homestay would only buy you one night’s accommodation at many hotels. For this reason it is important that you do not expect the same things as you would get at a hotel.

In a hotel you are a paying guest who deserves to be treated with great care by all employed staff. In a home stay you are a member of the family, but only one member of many. Your needs will always be considered, but sometimes you may not get exactly what you want, because in doing so other members of the family would be disadvantaged.

Again, a hotel is constructed with the idea that everyone lives independently – thick walls, cleaning services daily etc – so you can do what you like. In a homestay, everyone must always be aware of the rights of others and adjust their lifestyles accordingly.

Because there are no domestic servants in homestay, everyone is expected to do a little work to keep things clean and tidy. You should expect this, but if you feel you are being asked to do too much, talk to the Homestay Coordinator at school who will advise you and if necessary, talk to the homestay family.

The money the family will receive from you will cover your food, accommodation, electricity, water and laundry with a little left over as a “bonus” for their efforts. This bonus is appreciated, but will not make up for a difficult home stay guest – if you are too demanding most home stay families will simply decide that it is not worth the extra difficulties and ask you to leave.

Remember always that if you are nice to them, they will be far more likely to do extra things for you.
Homestays are important to your success.
Your home stay family is very important to your success and happiness in Australia. Please make a huge effort to make friends with them as this will provide you with many things in return to make your life easier.

Every home stay family is different.
Before you came to Australia you may have had an idea of what would be your ideal host family based on what you have seen of Western lifestyle in the media. These images however are often not accurate or true. They are manufactured in order to provide entertainment and profit. Wipe all these ideas from your mind and just accept the host family for the people they are.

Australia is a multi-cultural society with people from all over the world. Even within a family it is not unusual for parents to be of different cultural backgrounds. While this may seem a little strange to Chinese people who come from a homogenous society, it is of substantial benefit as it makes Australians interested in all the different cultures of the world.
Modern Australian families are very different to the image of “Mum, Dad and two or three kids”. While there are many families where this is the case, there are an equal number of families where divorce has separated families and remarriage has created “blended” families. Single parent families are also common in Australia. Australian law and Australians generally regard all these families as being equal.

Some families will have young children, some high school age children and some may be retired people with no children. Each one of these families has decided that they want to have you in their home, so please feel welcome and enjoy your time with them.

MEETING YOUR HOMESTAY FAMILY.
In most cases your homestay family will be at the airport to collect you. They will stand at the airport with a sign that has your name on it. This will be an exciting time for everyone and it is not unusual for you to forget nearly all of your English, but make sure that you do not forget your most important asset – a friendly smile.

Your homestay family will already know your name, so try to learn their names as soon as possible. Check to make sure what they would like you to call them – most will probably suggest their first name, but don’t be offended if they ask you to call them Mr or Mrs as this is quite common with older people.

You will probably need to put your luggage in the family car – make sure that you help them and create the best impression.

Once you arrive home, your parents will show you around the house. This is a courtesy as you will be able to see clearly anyway.

Listen carefully to make sure there are no rooms which they may not wish you to enter. As a general rule, everyone’s bedroom is private and you must never enter without permission. Most other rooms are used by everyone, but sometimes parents may have a special room for themselves.
After dinner on the first night, it is a good idea to introduce yourself by showing some photos of your life in your home country and your family. It will provide a personal touch and allow them to know you more quickly.

The first day is always exhausting, so if you are tired your family will understand. Just say “Excuse me. Would you mind if I go to bed now”, and they will understand.

AUSTRALIAN MANNERS

Australians and people from other nations often have different ideas about good and bad manners. Neither is right or wrong, but for the moment you are living in Australia so Australian manners are very important.

‘Please’, ‘thank you’ and ‘excuse me’ are important words and make everyone feel better. ‘Gidday’, ‘hello’, ‘good morning’ and ‘goodbye’ show that you are a friendly person who cares about others.

Always ask before using anything – you will quickly learn if it is one of those things that anyone can use and people will appreciate your care in asking.

Rooms such as bedrooms (at home) and offices and staffrooms (at school) belong to someone, so you must knock before entering.

Direct questions about age, boyfriends/girlfriends etc are normally not appropriate unless the other person is a good friend. Australians usually find out about a person by listening to what they say rather than by asking direct questions.

GENERAL INFORMATION – YOUR HOMESTAY

Expectations

The expectations of all parties are important to establish at the beginning of the homestay period. This will do much to prevent possible future problems.

The following is a list of the responsibilities of the home stay provider. They will provide:

- A bedroom, together with the use of living areas, such as lounge, kitchen, dining and toilet and bathroom.
- A key to the house to allow students free access. You must look after this key and not lose it.
- Three meals a day, ensuring adequate nutritious food by means of a regular variation in diet.
- Alternatively, they will allow the student to prepare his/her own meals as mutually agreed.
- Household materials such as towels, sheets, blankets and eating and cooking utensils.
- General cleaning services for living areas.
- Adequate laundry facilities as negotiated.

The responsibilities of the student are to:

- Keep common areas clean and tidy
- Be clean in your personal habits
- Help with minor household tasks as negotiated
- Always tell your Homestay parent where you are going and when you will be home
- Be able to be contacted at all times
Household Rules
Most homes have rules and ways of doing things. You need to find out what to do in order to make the best impression. It is better to ask than to assume.

Some important things to find out:
- Phone numbers for your host parents
- What to do about laundry
- Where should you put your suitcase
- Where to put rubbish
- How to lock up the house
- Your own key
- What time is breakfast and dinner
- What happens about lunch on school days
- What happens about lunch on the weekend
- When is it OK to have a shower
- Which shower/toilet should I use
- Is it OK to use the pool

Your room
This is your own space and very important to you. However when you leave, this room will once again belong to your host family, so it is important that you care for it and do not damage anything in it.

Your host family will probably tell you what is OK and not OK to do in your room but in general:
- Smoking is not permitted inside Australian homes. At school or in school uniform.
- Eating and drinking is done in the dining areas of the home - do not eat in the bedroom.
- Washing is hung to dry outside.
  - Headphones are used for stereos, TV’s etc unless everyone is watching together.
  - Turn off lights when not in use or when going to sleep.
  - Turn off your computer at night or when not in use (as it may still be connected to the internet and using download quota.

In Australia it is customary to sleep between two sheets, with blankets on top of that if necessary. This makes it easy to keep clean as the sheets and pillowcases can be washed weekly.

Transport to School
Some of the homestay families will live close to school. If they do, you should ask them to show you the way to walk to school. This will give you independence and allow you to meet with your friends at school before class if you like.
If you live further away, you will need to check with your homestay parents about public transport. Some parents may be happy to drive you to school, especially if they have other children at school or if it is on the way to work.
Public transport will provide you with independence so try to master it as soon as possible. Please remember, in Brisbane, if your bus is approaching, **you must signal the bus to stop**.... otherwise it may drive straight past.

**For all Public Transport information**, including bus and train timetables, go to the Translink website: [www.translink.com.au](http://www.translink.com.au) This website has all the current information including a journey planner, maps and schedule updates.

You will also need to purchase a **Go Card**. This is Translink’s electronic ticket that allows you to travel seamlessly on all bus, train and ferry services around Brisbane. [www.translink.com.au/ticket-and-fares/go-card](http://www.translink.com.au/ticket-and-fares/go-card) This website will explain the Go Card, where you can get one, how to top up your credit etc. As you are a full time Secondary student, you can purchase a concession card. We recommend you not put more than $50 on your card at one time, because this is a big loss if you were to lose your go card.

The most important thing to remember when using your Go Card is to swipe on...... then to swipe your card again when you get off (or it will calculate a longer journey and charge you more money).

**The Bathroom**

Whenever you use the bathroom make sure that you close the bathroom door – often there will be a lock on the door and it is appropriate to use this. Students are expected to **provide their own toiletries** (soap, shampoo, toothpaste etc).

Most Australians use the shower everyday either in the morning or in the evening – check with your host family to see which time is best. Some houses use solar power rather than gas or electricity for water heating, so this may influence when is most convenient. Baths are used only infrequently.

Once you have finished showering, you should commence drying yourself in the shower cubicle to minimise the amount of water on the bathroom floor. Most bathrooms will also have a bathmat that you should stand on when you get out of the shower. **Please take short showers.** It is considered inappropriate to take a long time in the shower or bath as this uses up a lot of hot water (which can be expensive) or does not let others use the facility (which is annoying). Try to be quick. It is an Australian Government initiative to limit showers to 4 minutes.

Check with your host family as to where you should put your wet towel – each family is different. Towels are not changed daily, and usually you would use the same towel for up to a week.

**The Toilet**

Australian toilets are maintained in a clean state (even public toilets at school etc) and it is unnecessary to put toilet paper on the seat before sitting down. If you use too much toilet paper you will block the toilet and this will be very embarrassing.

Some people like to take about four squares of toilet paper and wipe the seat. This is OK.

**You should NEVER squat above the toilet or stand on it.**

Boys need to lift the toilet seat before urinating.
Please flush the toilet paper down the toilet. Put nothing else down the toilet – see below for information on disposal of tampons etc.

All other products must be wrapped and placed in a rubbish bin. Do NOT leave any sanitary items for other people to clean up.

The toilet seat should be closed before you leave. Most toilets have dual flush mechanisms, so please choose the appropriate button. Many toilets will also have some air freshener on a shelf so please give the air a short squirt to make it more pleasant for the next person coming in.

Personal Hygiene for Boys
Australia’s climate can be very humid so the regular use of deodorant is important. Boys should shower regularly, and put on deodorant each morning before dressing. Many Australian boys will also carry a roll-on deodorant for use at school, especially if they have been engaged in physical activity like sports. Be sure to wash and shave every day and change your uniform regularly.

You must purchase at least two uniforms.

Personal Hygiene for Girls
Sanitary Pads and tampons need to be changed 3 – 4 hourly or sooner if required, so you may need to be aware of disposal methods at home and at school.

Never try to flush a pad down the toilet – they are too big and will cause a toilet blockage.
NEVER flush tampons in the toilet.

At school
Sanitary pads and tampons need to be wrapped in paper and disposed of in the sanitary dispenser found in the toilet cubicle.

At home
Each family may have individual requirements regarding the disposal of pads/tampons and you may want to ask your host mother about what to do. As a general rule, if you are in doubt, wrap the tampon or pad in paper and put in a plastic bag which you can put in the council garbage bin.

MEALS
Your host family will try to cook meals that you would like, but remember that whoever is cooking will want to cook just one meal, not lots of little ones for everyone. Tell your host family if there is any food you cannot eat (allergy, religious reasons etc) or if there is something that you would really like (eg: soy sauce, rice more often etc), but try then to eat what the family normally eats – remember you will be in Australia for a long time so if you can adjust to Australian food early in your home stay, you will have more fun.
Your host family might enjoy a traditional meal from your country if you are able to cook it. There are lots of food shops close to your home where you can buy ingredients.

Typical Australian meals are:

Breakfast
Often this is a very rushed meal. Most families do not eat breakfast together and often times it is a simple meal of cereal and toast. Many times students will make their own breakfast.
A hot breakfast (such as bacon and eggs, pancakes etc) is normally for special occasions or perhaps on the weekend or holidays. As many parents work, it is expected that you will put away cereals after using and rinse plates and wipe down the bench at the end of your meal. Most homes have breakfast at about 7.00 – 7.30am.

**Lunch**
Lunch is normally sandwiches, fruit and maybe a sweet cake. Again, because it is a simple meal many students will make their own lunch to take to school. **Please communicate** with your host family as to what you like and what you dislike. A microwave oven and toasted sandwich machine are provided for students use in the E6 Staff Kitchen. Remember to use these appliances responsibly, and to clean them after every use.

**Dinner**
Dinner is more formal and families often use this as a time to catch up. It is normally a hot meal of meat and vegetables, although in summer (especially at weekends) a barbeque is popular with grilled meat and salad. Dinner is usually eaten between 6.00pm and 7.00pm but every family is different. If your host family is involved in the hospitality industry, you may find some members are not around at night time.

While one of your host parents will probably cook the meal (don’t forget that in Australia housework is shared by both mothers and fathers) children will often assist by setting the table, assisting to clear and washing up (or loading the dishwasher) – you should offer to do these things as they are often the type of chore that is expected of a home stay student (In Australia boys also help with such jobs, so don’t feel embarrassed if your family expect you to help).

**A few hints with mealtimes:**

- Wash your hands before the meal
- Thank the person who cooked the meal
- Make sure that you eat with your mouth closed
- Try not to make slurping noises while eating
- Place your knife and fork together on the plate when finished (in restaurants this is how the waiter knows to take your plate away)
- If you need to leave the table before everyone has finished excuse yourself.

**If you will not be home for a meal, make sure that you tell your host family beforehand.** They will appreciate this.
If you want to have a meal with your friends, then it is a good idea to meet at a cheap restaurant for lunch or dinner – it is not the responsibility of your host family to provide meals for your friends.

**TELEPHONE USAGE**
Each student is expected to have a mobile phone with an Australian SIM card. You **must** always communicate with your host family to let them know where you are and when you will be home.

**You are responsible to have your mobile phone ALWAYS with a charged battery** (Recharge every night!) **You are also responsible to have available credit on your phone at all times.**
Most host family’s worry about student’s use of their landline telephone as it is easy to run up a big bill with phone calls.

All long distance and overseas calls from your Homestay’s landline are listed on Australian phone bills, and can be expensive.

The best and cheapest way to contact your family and friends overseas is via Skype, MSN Messenger, Facebook or Twitter etc.

You can also purchase an Overseas Phone Card. Each time you make a call the cost of it is deducted from the phone card. You can buy and recharge these cards from convenience stores and some shops. Please remember that each time you use this card there is a fee for the local call connection – ask your homestay family how much this is.

Your host family will not object if you want to make reverse charge (collect) calls to your parents.

INTERNET USAGE

Australian internet access may be quite slow compared to your country. It is also very expensive. Most students bring their own laptop with them, but if you have to use the family’s computer then you need to be very careful about your internet usage.

Most families have a monthly download quota and if it is exceeded then the internet becomes even slower, and all family members using will be disadvantaged and upset.

Minimal Internet usage is included with your Homestay fees. However, we suggest that you buy a rechargeable mobile internet connection so that you are responsible for all costs involved. Or you visit an internet café. Ask your Host family how much internet you are allowed to use each month, and monitor your usage carefully.

You are NOT permitted to download anything onto the computer without asking permission. In Australia, there is no such thing as a “FREE” download. If you haven’t paid for it, then it is probably illegal to download it. This includes MUSIC and MOVIES and TV SERIES etc.

If you have your own laptop then you must ALWAYS turn it OFF, if you are not using it. NEVER leave it on overnight or while you are at school, because it may still be connected to the internet, and continue to talk or download to the internet server… which unnecessarily uses up valuable monthly quota.

What is a download? A download is anything that comes via the internet onto your computer screen. Every Youtube view etc is a download and costs money. Some students have been misinformed when they think a download is only when you save something onto the hard drive.

Virus Protection Please ensure that your virus protection software is up to date!

You have come to Australia to study and to succeed…. Not to play games and watch movies.
PAYMENTS
Your homestay fees cover payments for one week before school starts in January and one week after your offer finishes. If you are returning home during the Christmas break and plan to return to your homestay family the following year then you need to pay cash equivalent to $100 holding fee per week to your homestay family. This is explained in your contract and there are NO exceptions.

STAYING OVER
Sometimes you may be invited to stay at someone’s house overnight. If you want to do this, discuss it with your host parents who will probably be agreeable so long as you provide them with your contact details. You will need to fill in a Travel Consent Form available from the HOD International if the overnight stay is not with another KGSC homestay family.

Australian friends will understand that you may not be able to reciprocate by asking your friends to stay overnight at your house, but you may ask your homestay family.
If you stay over at a friend’s house, they will need to hold a Blue Card. While there, make sure that you obey the rules of that household. As this is an extra, it is assumed that you will provide your own transport to and from your friend’s house. This is not the responsibility of host families.

GOING OUT – YOUR SOCIAL LIFE
Everyone hopes that you make lots of friends and have a great time while you are in Australia. However it is important that you be sensible in what you do and be considerate of others.

If you are going out, always ask permission from your host family. They will worry if you do not come home as expected. They should give their permission and you will create a good impression. If there is a dispute as to what is acceptable or not, you must do as your host parents say, but you may wish to consult with KGSC staff on your return to school. Make sure your host parents know where you are going at all times.

As a general rule, you should be home by 6pm on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights. You need to be home by this time so that you can study, eat the evening meal with your homestay family and discuss your day’s activities in English. Friday and Saturday nights are suitable for socialising and you need to be home by 10pm. This time may be negotiated with your homestay parents occasionally.

Make sure you have suitable transport arrangements as your host families are not expected to drive you to parties etc. If you come home late, make sure that you do not make noise as you enter the house. Girls in particular should be careful not to be walking home alone in the dark.

You should be aware that it is illegal to drink alcohol until you are 18 years old in Australia and all non-doctor prescribed drugs (eg: marijuana, speed, ecstasy etc) are illegal. It is not OK to do these things, just because others are doing them. You are a guest in the country and when you get caught you WILL be returned to your home country immediately. EQI has legal welfare for you while you are enrolled in this program, and have ZERO tolerance for all of the above activities.
Make sure that you always check on the prices of entertainment (movies, theatre etc) so you can pay your own admission charges. You will lose friends quickly if you expect them to pay for you.
It is usual for families to have special functions such as going to the movies or going to the beach for a swim. In all these cases, you should be invited to attend. If there is a cost for these activities, the homestay family is not obliged to pay for you.

You need to ask how much it is going to cost before you attend.