



Dunbar ESOL Homestay Services

Dunbar ESOL Homestay Services

Homestay Guidelines for International Students



Dunbar ESOL Homestay Services

Dear Host Family

Thank you for agreeing to host an international home stay student. In our experience you are about to enter a very pleasant journey of cultural exchange, new friendships and fun.

What is a 'homestay'? What do students expect?

The role of the host family is to provide students with a warm friendly and authentic taste of New Zealand family life. This is done through allowing the student to participate in normal, day to day family activities. The family provides a rich context to the learning experience.

No two homestays are the same. The types of families, homes and relationships are all very different but successful homestays have the same common ingredients:

1. Comfort
2. Communication
3. Care

Comfort

You are responsible for providing:

- A private, well lit, comfortable room that is well ventilated, warm in winter and cold in summer
- Storage for clothing and personal items
- A desk suitable for study and homework
- Access to laundry, or laundry done regularly
- Clean bedding and towels that are changed weekly.
- Half board – breakfast and dinner on weekdays , 3 meals a day at weekends or
- Full board – 3 meals day, 7 days per week. Access to snacks
- Bathroom/shower access

You will also need to:

- Treat the student with respect
- Make the student feel comfortable and part of the family
- Notify Dunbar if there are any changes or additions to the household
- Look after the student in your home to the best of your ability



Dunbar ESOL Homestay Services

Possible Extras.

- An old mobile phone can be lent to students so they can communicate – make sure it is pre pay and not a contract!
- More and more students bring lap tops so access to wireless or broad band is appreciated

You are not expected to:

- Provide internet connection for the student
- Pay for toll or mobile phone calls
- Cook special food
- Offer accommodation to visiting friends or relatives
- Comply with unreasonable requests

Communication

To support your student's school lessons they will need to practice their speaking and listening skills. Students who stay in homestays make fast progress because they get to use the language authentically. Try to spend at **least 20 minutes a day** talking with your student. It may be hard in the beginning for the student but its worth persevering.

Some communication tips are:

- Try not to speak too fast but not so slow that you sound like your batteries are going flat 😊
- Use simple language without too many idioms, short sentences and common words
- If you get stuck write it down, often students can read much better than speak or they will check in their dictionaries
- Use you hands, draw pictures, mime and demonstrate what you mean as students, particularly in the first couple of weeks find it very hard to understand speaking
- Smile a lot – so your intentions are clear even if the words are confusing!

Good communication topics/strategies are:

- Talking about the day at school, classmates and teachers
- Family life in their countries. We encourage students to bring photos over of their families to give a talking point
- Offer to help with their homework



Dunbar ESOL Homestay Services

- Offer to help them prepare for a situation that they are going to face. For example, what to say when they get on and off the bus.
- Take them out to family events, church or clubs
- Cook together
- Walk the dog
- If you have children see if the student would like to read aloud a story but they may need some practice before hand
- Card or board games

Care

As well as comfort and care students need some emotional support, especially in the first few weeks while they settle in. It will be normal for the student to be suffering from a combination of culture shock, jet lag and homesickness. Add to this unfamiliar food and new people and it is a potentially hard time.

If you are spending 20 minutes a day communicating then you are probably already giving a good level of support. If your student is having a hard time, encourage them to talk. Give praise and support for all the things that they are achieving each day. Most problems are sorted out by just listening.

If you would like to read more about culture shock have a look at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/culture_shock

<http://www.uwec.edu/counsel/pubs/shock.htm>

http://worldwide.edu/travel_planner/culture_shock.html

If you get very worried about your student give us a ring at Dunbar and we will see what we can do to help you.

Pre arrival student induction

Before your students arrive Dunbar ESOL Homestay Services will have sent some introductory information about your family – who is in the family, ages and occupations. They will also have received an induction booklet which helps them prepare for staying in New Zealand and in a host family. The local coordinator will give you a copy of this booklet if you wish. The key information students receive is:



Dunbar ESOL Homestay Services

1. Always agree with the host family on the times to be home after school or at weekends so they always know where you are.
2. If you are not going to be home for a meal let the family know in good time
3. Get permission before using the phone , computers or any other equipment
4. Be prepared to help around the house
5. Try to talk to the host family if you don't understand something or are worried about anything
6. Use the shower for only 5 – 10 minutes max so there is enough hot water for everyone in the family. Hot water in NZ is very expensive and often limited.

Student arrival

Most students will have been on a long flight to get to NZ and the younger they are the less likely it is that they will have been out of their countries before. This may well be their first time away from family and friends. They are usually tired, disorientated and nervous when they arrive. All at once the students have to manage new people, places, customs and cultures which can be daunting!

The flight and cultural differences usually adversely affect the student's ability to communicate and understand English. For the first couple of days make sure you double check any information you give. As students get over the jet lag and their confidence grows so will their English level. What students do notice on the first day is not what is said to them or what the house is like but if people smile or not!

We encourage students will bring with them a small gift for you. There is not expectation that you give a gift back.

Day 1 checklist

- Make sure they drink lots of water – it helps the jetlag
- Encourage them not to go to sleep too early on the first day. If they can stay up until near the usual bed time they will get over jet lag faster
- Be aware that because of the time difference they may wake up in the middle of the night for the first few days.
- Show students how to use the bed – many are not used to sleeping under quilts
- Show students how to use the any necessary appliances, for example electric blankets. Students also need to know how to use the toilet, how to sit on the seat rather than stand and how to flush it.

Orientation for your student

Many students find it hard to orientate themselves. For them our houses can all look the same, so getting on and off at the right bus stop is often a challenge. Many are the stories of students who have



Dunbar ESOL Homestay Services

stayed on the bus to the end of the line, not knowing quite what to do. To help the students encourage them to take photos of the area and walk around with them, point out any features that will help them remember your house. When they go out make check that they have your address and emergency contact numbers.

Transportation

If your student has to use public transport try to do a trial run with them first. If there is not time then point out any landmarks. Write down the name of the bus company, bus numbers and the name of the stop for getting on and off the bus. Give your students a clear idea how long the trip usually takes. You can always some bus tickets in advance for your students which they can reimburse you for.

Day to Day Kiwi life

Remember that although students are often willing to help around the house they have no idea how to do it! For example dishwashers are very uncommon in some countries. In other countries it is the habit to have a maid who does the cooking and cleaning so even simple tasks like making toast are a challenge. Demonstrate to your student how to do household tasks rather than assume they know what to do.

They may well forget the limit on hot water. Show your student the hot water tank and explain that once the water is used it takes time to heat up again. The last person in the morning who has a cold shower will appreciate it!

Consider putting a toll bar on your phone so that mobile and overseas calls can't be made and you are sure not to get a nasty surprise.

Keep an eye on

Adjusting to Kiwi life can be difficult. The change of food brings many students either constipation or diarrhea for some. Other students get overwhelmed and 'hide out' in their rooms, not socializing with the family, encourage them to participate. Other students suffer from homesickness until they settle in and feel comfortable. Sometimes an extra call to home helps ease the homesickness

Correcting students English

Many students love being corrected. However, it is a bit of an art knowing how much to do. You don't want to demotivate the student or make them feel uncomfortable talking to you. Ask your student how they feel about correction – do they want it at home or not?

Generally it is not a good idea to interrupt the student when they are mid stream of a complex or emotional explanation. However, if you have no idea what they mean, then say so. The most sensitive way to correct is to gently repeat what they have said with the correct version.

A tip. Try to avoid the temptation (teenagers succumb to this one) of teaching 'bad' language as it can lead to embarrassment in other situations.

Correcting student manners

This is a good idea but be gentle. Table manners vary greatly. In some cultures it is considered good manner to show your appreciation of the food by slurping and making noise as you eat! For us, this is considered bad manners. Language learning is about learning culture too so if you gently point out the difference it will usually be appreciated – in this case maybe wait till dinner is over and have a quiet word.

If in doubt

If you find yourself with a question or want to talk something through then just give us a ring at Dunbar – we are here to help you.

Best wishes

Jeanette Barsdell

Further reading

We recommend the ebook Homestay Guru by Barbara Takase. Barbara is a Kiwi who has been in the homestay business for a long time. Her book is invaluable for new homestay families. You can download the book at: www.homestayguru.com