



Living in a Homestay



Living with a 'host family' in Britain will be different to life with your family in your own country, but it will help you to improve your English and can also be a rewarding experience. OISE Bristol hosts do not always consist of two parents with children. For example, a widow or widower, a single person or a couple whose children are grown up can make excellent hosts too. You should try to fit in with the everyday life of the household. If there are any minor difficulties or misunderstandings, these can usually be cleared up quickly with a little goodwill and good humour.

Your Room

Your host will probably give you a house key, but it is unlikely that you will have a key to your room as it is not usual to lock bedroom doors. You should have a bed, lighting, a table or desk, chair and enough storage space for your clothes. Your host will keep your room clean, but you must keep it tidy. Be careful in your room – just as you would in your own home. If you break or damage anything, tell your host as soon as possible and offer to pay for the damage. Ask your host before using any of your own electrical equipment. The voltage in the UK is 240 volts so you will probably need an adaptor.

Heating & Lighting

All homes have some heating in the bedrooms, but your room may be colder than you are used to in your own country. Gas and electricity in the UK are very expensive and we do not heat our homes all day and night. If you are cold, ask your host for extra covers for your bed or for extra heating. Do not leave gas or electric heaters switched on all night or when you are out. This is very expensive and is also a fire hazard.

Meals

You will normally eat with other members of the household. If you cannot eat any particular food for dietary, religious or other reasons, you must tell your host. Be on time for your meals and remember to tell someone if you are going to be late or if you do not require a meal.



Domestic

You will be expected to make your own bed. You may like to help with small jobs such as clearing the table after a meal, but you will not be asked to do housework. You should not use the kitchen yourself without permission or help yourself to food and drink.

Most homestays have only one bathroom so speak to your host to arrange the most convenient time to take a bath or shower. If you do not understand how the equipment in the bathroom and toilet works, ask your host and they will explain it to you. Always leave the bath, shower, wash-basin and toilet clean after use.

Sheets and towels are provided by your host. Your host will provide access to laundry facilities or may be willing to wash your clothes for you. If not, ask your host when it is convenient to do washing and where to put your wet things. Your host will probably let you borrow the ironing board and iron if required.

Visiting

If your homestay family has invited their own friends to the house, try to be sensitive to their need for occasional privacy and do not expect always to be included. You must always ask if you want to invite friends. Ask where you should entertain them and the time that they should arrive and leave. Try to be reasonably quiet and do not disturb the rest of the household, especially late at night.

Absences

You must tell your host if you are going to be away overnight or coming home later than normal. If you are unexpectedly absent, your host will worry and may contact the school or the police. Make sure you have your homestay address and telephone numbers with you and give your mobile phone number to your host in case you need to contact one another.

A member of OISE Bristol staff is always 'on call' after school and at weekends for emergencies only. The school emergency mobile number is: 07850780801

Questions

If you have anything you would like to ask or discuss concerning your homestay, please speak to Gwen Waller, who is our Accommodation & Welfare Officer.

The secret of success on your visit to Britain is to be interested - listen to and try to understand other people's ideas (even if you do not agree with them) and adapt yourself to different customs while you are away from home. Be friendly - try to take part in the conversation and social life around you. If you make good friends while you are here, your friendships could last a lifetime.